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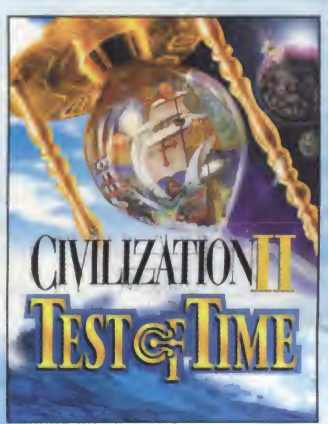

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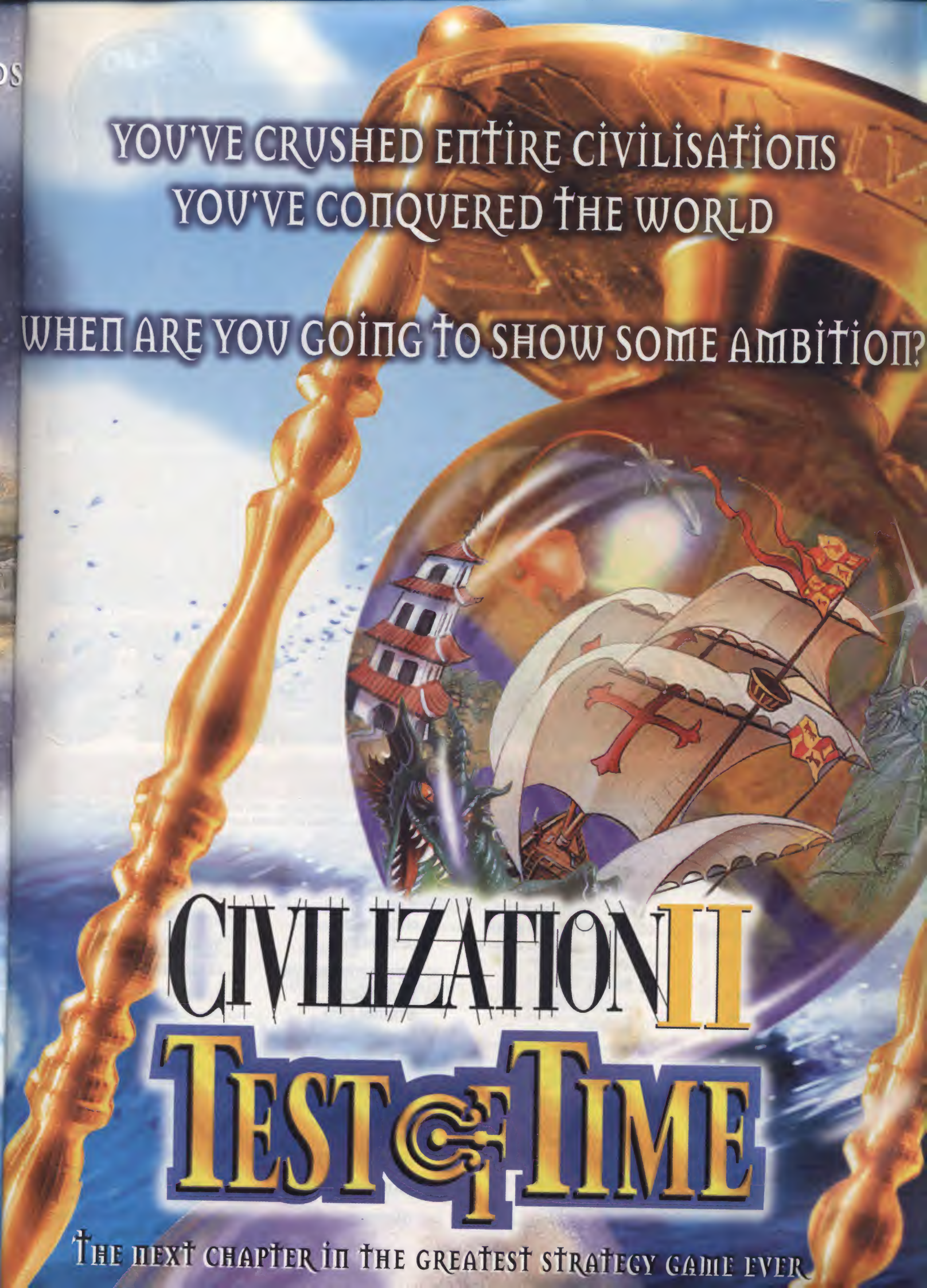
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TEST OF TIME
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38 ULTIMA ASCENSION Richard Garriott spills the beans on the ninth in the epic RPG series, sure to be the best yet.

£10 OFF HIGH STREET PRICE HIDDEN & DANGEROUS SPECIAL READERS' OFFER SEE P.27

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"*System Shock 2* must rate as having the most suspense ever seen in a computer game"

62 **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** Looking Glass Studios' futuristic sci-fi RPG finally arrives. Tense, atmospheric and uncommonly good? You betcha.

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ON THE CD

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That silvery thing on the cover is loaded with great demos, patches and helpful files guaranteed to ensure you get more out of your PC

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Patches for Aliens Vs Predator, TOCA 2, Starsiege, Warbirds, X-Wing Alliance, SimCity 3000, CM3 and lots more

Lots of useful games utilities and...

oh, just go to page 124 and see

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Quite literally the most definitive games news section in the universe

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The ongoing story of life in the land of *Black & White*

It's a three-way war in the 3D graphics market.

WIN! **THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS** Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (80), *PC ZONE*, 19 Boisover Street, London W1P 7HJ.** The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The Ed's decision is final. Closing date: Thursday 12 August. The winner of our August (#79) cover compo was David Taylor from Walsall, who wins something from the *ZONE* prizes cupboard for sending in the correct answer (*Dungeon Keeper*) to last month's little teaser.

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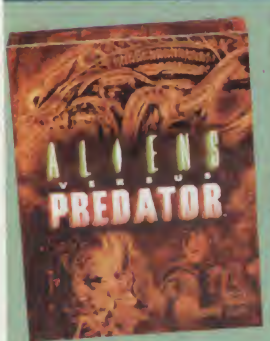

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GET REAL – LITERALLY

We are often asked what we think will be the next evolutionary step in PC gaming. It's a topic of discussion that's often bandied about in journalistic circles, and inevitably the conversation turns to talk of the next generation of 3D chipsets, bump mapping, texture compression and DVD. I believe that this approach to unearthing the truth behind the next truly ground-breaking game experience is both misguided and naïve. While it's true that advances in graphics technology will make games *look* more realistic, they will not have any profound effect on the actual gaming experience. So developers are currently looking at ways to get you more immersed in their titles.

There are many ways to go about this. *Aliens Vs Predator*, for example, is cited by Richie as being one of the scariest games ever. Fear is an emotion we can all identify with, and any game that scares you half to death is already halfway to capturing your attention completely and making you believe you are 'there'. Paul Mallinson singles out *System Shock 2* as an atmospheric masterpiece (see our review on page 62), and admits to getting lost completely in its futuristic charms. Both these titles triggered different emotions in our reviewers, and go some way to tapping into your emotions in order to get you fully immersed. And of course there are games that can even make you laugh (the first two *Monkey Island* games are a perfect example).

But what about a gaming experience that taps into every emotion you possess and presents you with a 'real' world in which to release them? This is the ultimate goal for many game developers, and you may think we are light years away from seeing such a title. Not so.

If you really want the most immersive gaming experience imaginable on your PC, play with other people. Both *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest* (both reviewed on page 82) force you to interact with other human players, and the rewards for this are too many to list here. Both these games simply act as a backdrop for your adventures, and the real entertainment comes from talking to, teaming up with and fighting against real people. There is simply no digital substitute for this, and if you really want a gaming experience that stretches your emotions and imagination to the limit, this is currently the *only* way to do it. Put simply: if you want real entertainment, play with real people (not literally – you'll get arrested).

Enjoy the issue, see you next month.

Chris Anderson, Editor

MEET THE ZONE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a reviewer who's a fan of the genre

CHRIS ANDERSON

What's the scariest game you've ever played?

Realms Of The Haunting. It's not for the faint-hearted.

What would be your ideal role-playing game?

A combination of *Ultima Online*'s gameplay and *EverQuest*'s graphics will do just nicely, thank you.

PAUL MALLINSON

Quake, Doom, Half-Life, System Shock 2, Ecstatica, Resident Evil 2... As far as games are concerned, I scare easily.

A massive RPG in the style of *System Shock 2* based on a George A Romero trilogy of zombie films.

RICHIE SHOEMAKER

Aliens Vs Predator, by a mile, followed by *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*.

Elite set in the *Star Wars* universe: loads of goods to trade, missions, NPCs, first-person action... everything, basically.

MARK HILL

Aliens Vs Predator, playing as the marine. Lights off, sound up, trousers full.

A truly in-depth one set in the *Star Wars* or *Star Trek* universe, with thousands of characters but none of the online geeks.

STEVE HILL

Jet Set Willy.

A football hooligan RPG.

CHARLIE BROOKER

Taking part in a razor blade-swallowing competition down the docks with some naked sailors.

One where you walk around a small-town supermarket punching brats in the face.

PAUL PRESLEY

What's the scariest game you've ever played?

An Infocom text adventure called *Moonmist*. The power of words alone instills fear and terror to this very day.

What would be your ideal role-playing game?

AD&D – Advanced Dementia and Delirium – set in the psycho ward of a mental hospital.

KEITH PULLIN

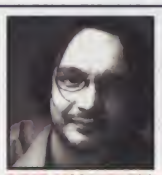
Spin The Bottle on my fifteenth birthday – you should have seen the birds in my class.

One where I could stay in bed all day watching *The Simpsons*.

ADAM PHILLIPS

I know it's old hat now but it would have to be *Doom*.

An online futuristic virtual city where you can take on specific roles and 'quests' with fellow players. And in the first person.



DAVID MCCANDLESS

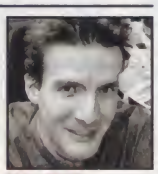
Dungeon Master.

One in which I am the master and I kill everyone.

WARREN CHRISMAS

Spin The Bottle on Hastings beach, summer 1985.

I don't 'do' RPGs – not the traditional type, anyway. I certainly wouldn't go near a game with elves, dwarves or goblins.



PHIL WAND

A battle of nerves down a long straight on the A414 just outside Norton Heath.

One where the central character works In an air-conditioned building, and quests involve eating white Magnum lollies.

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TEL: 0171 631 1433
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Origination Elements 0171 323 0022
Printed in England by ET Heron
Distribution Seymour Distribution

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WIN! Which development team does Bill Roper work for? Send entries on the back of a postcard to: I've read the small print; *PC ZONE* (80), 19 Bolsover Street, London, W1P 7HJ by Thursday 12 August. Winner and prize announced same place next issue. Jon Emerson from Poole wins the *ZONE* grab bag of goodies from last month's compo for correctly answering that George Lucas directed the *Star Wars* movies. Well done, Jon.

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Dreamcast
NINTENDO 64
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MAILBOX

The PC versus console debate comes to an end *(Thank God – a reader)*, a lone voice shouts out in defence of pointy ears, and originality in games once more comes up for discussion

ANSWERED BY Chris Anderson

Charlie and Steve's feature has sparked controversy among the *ZONE* readership.

CONTACT INFO

Write to us, and if your letter is selected as Letter of the Month we'll send you a prize.

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CHAT FORUM If you've got something pressing to say, check out the 'lively' chat forum on our website. Point your browser at **www.pczone.co.uk** for further info.

FIGHTING REALITY

Just a comment on your "Fighting Fantasy" article: the authors' arguments, ironically, didn't seem to be rooted in reality. For a start, sci-fi and fantasy settings are not minority interests – *Lords Of The Rings* was recently voted the nation's favourite book – and, judging from the amount of hysteria around at the moment, *Star Wars* is also its favourite film.

Secondly, if Charlie Brooker dislikes both these genres so much, then surely it was hypocritical of him to give *Final Fantasy VII* such a high mark in his review? This is a game which features dragons and goblins next door to spaceships and giant robots, then buries it all beneath a heavy dose of Japanese weirdness. There's no way a game like this could be transposed into a real-world setting, and a large part of its charm is down to its depth of imagination and variety of scenarios.

Finally, sci-fi and fantasy games don't appeal only to geeks. I know several people who have no interest in the 'fantasy' genre whatsoever but who have played through and thoroughly enjoyed *Zelda* on the N64, a huge game, full of pointy ears and magic.

At the end of the day, every genre has its wheat and chaff; really good games shine beyond their themes. Besides, there's nothing wrong with indulging in a little escapism after working all day in the real world. *Coronation Street – The Computer Game*? Er... no ta.

Jon C

I fear you missed the point somewhat, Jon. Charlie and Steve pointed out clearly in their feature that they have nothing against futuristic or fantasy games per se, they would just like to see some new titles that are based on concepts that have some basis in reality (*Kingpin* being a case in point). That said, I share your view that *Coronation Street – The Computer Game* would be about as much fun as gouging your eye out with a hot poker. Let's hope it never happens, eh?

READER IN IDEA SHOCKER

I think you should include a letters page for people with ideas for improvements for sequels to games or even new game ideas. I know you people don't make the games, but I'm sure someone at those game designers' offices reads your magazine to see what kind of reviews their game got. You probably think I'm crazy to think that they'd actually pay attention to the public, but at least it would give us a chance to voice our opinions. I know there are loads of people just bursting with ideas, I know I am. Oh, and maybe Charlie Brooker could 'comment' on the ideas – that'd be a good laugh.

C Kane

It's a good idea in theory, but in practice we would probably get hundreds of 'ideas' that bear a remarkable similarity to each other. But what the hell, come on readers, send those brilliant game ideas in (no more than 500 words in total please), and I'll get Charlie to take a look at them, for that would indeed be 'a good laugh'.

TANKS FOR NOTHING

After reading your article on realism, I didn't realise you would confuse it with perhaps a more important aspect of games, namely originality.

In your review of *Tanktics*, the reviewer starts by slating the designers for a crummy plot/lack of realism, disregarding the fact that the game is a fairly original idea and does not require much of a plot. Did *Tetris* have an in-depth story? *Puzzle Bobble* a realistic

LETTER OF THE MONTH

GOODIES WINNER!

CONVERTED

I've just read your article on Total Conversions, which enables you to design a game using existing game engines written by large software companies.

It really struck me like a bolt of lightning that this could be a means of getting back to the way software used to be written, ie Bedroom Development Ltd. I really believe this is where the greatest achievements in game ideas stem from. Just take that guy who did *Metal Gear Solid* (still waiting for a PC conversion!) – he came up with that idea when he was writing *Solid Snake* on the MSX and was just waiting for the right technology to come out to realise his dream.

I think it's up to the large software houses to encourage this form of development. If they invest time and money in creating the latest and greatest game engine and development tools, they could then license them out and share the success of any great games that come out.

This means that when we see Pentium V and Dreamcast 2045, home programmers might still find it possible to get their game ideas onto the shelves when 20 terrabytes cache memory running at twice the clock speed is the norm! Seriously though, this could be a real problem when games grow to huge sizes and only a handful of software houses can afford to develop games.

Andrew Brindle, Bolton

***Russian Front* is a great example of what can be done with an existing game engine.**

Total Conversions are a great way for gamers to produce the game they really want from an existing game engine, and this practice is to be encouraged. However, it takes a lot of time to put one together with any degree of competence. If any of you are toying with one now and want someone's opinion on the results so far, send us what you've got and we'll be happy to take a look at it.

slant on life? Games don't need to be 'real-life' to be fun.

Not to mention that the review is sandwiched between two extremely unoriginal games with equally stupid plotlines: *TA: Kingdoms*, another RTS game, and *MechWarrior 3*, giant battling robots again. They both got good reviews, and you ignored the plots. I think you were a little unfair on *Tanktics* in this respect.

Stefan, aka Bunghole

Steve Hill's comments on *Tanktics* were referring to the fact that the game is very much off-the-wall, not that it was unoriginal. This was to point out the console leanings of the game, as this kind of thing is not to every PC gamer's taste. And to say that Steve was unfair on the game is in itself unfair – he gave it a respectable score of 82, elevating it to the heady heights of *PC ZONE* Recommended status.

***Tanktics:* were we unfair?**

THE END

After reading some of the letters in Mailbox about the PC being a games platform, I have to admit I don't really see it becoming the best. The main reason for this is the fact that on the PC you have to install things. Now, for most games I own there's no problem in installing software: place the CD in the drive, it auto-detects it, you follow the set-up screens and then get into the game. But then you find the problems. Take *Rollcage*: nice graphics and a good game from what I've been able to play of it, but it crashes and stalls etc etc. You install things and the 3D card doesn't work with it, so you have to download a patch or something to remedy the situation. I mean, even your demo discs never work. *Half-Life*, *NHL 99* and *Settlers III* worked, but nothing else did. You get into the menu screens of the game – fine, everything's okay. But then you try to get into the action and the PC goes back into Windows. I looked forward to playing *Breakneck* but it wouldn't run. It's not as if I have a crap PC – it's a Pentium III 500MHz with 128Mb of RAM and a 32-meg ATI Rage Pro graphics card. Maybe my computer is just too good?

But back to the point. With a PlayStation or N64, both of which I own, you get no fuss and instant gaming. I'm not a console fan, as I feel PC games that work well for me are far better than anything on the consoles, it's just I go into a shop, pick up a game and wonder if it will crash. In my view, PCs need to be a little more user-friendly before competing with the consoles for games.

Ben Mallinson, Huddersfield

Okay, you have a problem getting your PC to run certain games. You are in the minority. You may not believe this, but Windows 98 is the most stable gaming platform the PC has ever had, and most games we install in the office run smoothly and without problems. Admittedly, the current batch of 3D cards are trying their best to cause comedic scenarios with as many games as they can, but if you stick with a Voodoo or TNT-based card and *don't* keep upgrading every time a new one comes along you should be okay.

In our opinion the PC is by far the best and most flexible gaming platform, and is worth the small amount of technical hassle sometimes required to make things work.

And on that bombshell, the PC versus console debate is now officially closed. Forever.

> **"There were a great many of us who enjoyed Sick Notes and took it for the light-hearted end page that it was"**
>
> **J LEWIS, MOURNING THE DISCONTINUATION OF CHARLIE'S PAGE**

HE'S BORED

Does anyone else find it depressing that there's so little originality nowadays? All I see are more and more *Doom* and *C&C* clones, which vary only marginally from each other. Surely we don't need so many? Why can't games developers come up with something new, rather than investing all their time and resources into something that's been done a hundred times before? There are some great programmers out there, working for large companies, so why not use their skills to come up with something new? It seems that anyone can produce a good 3D shoot 'em up, but no one is prepared to experiment.

So please developers, come up with some novel ideas – you never know, you may start off a whole new genre and others will start copying you instead.

Robert Wilkinson

Large publishers will not gamble on original ideas any more – that's why companies like Lionhead and Mucky Foot break away on their own, as they can then get on with producing stuff that's new and original. But we don't think the future for PC games is as bleak as you suggest – there are some amazing titles due to come out by the end of the year. So don't worry, be happy.

TAKE NOTE

You must have received more than enough insulting letters concerning your section (or rather ex-section) Sick Notes. I would just like to say on my (and I'm sure many other people's) behalf, that many of us enjoyed it, and took it for the light-hearted end page that it was.

Charlie's column *will* return. You have been warned.

I'm sure I'm not alone in wishing Charlie Brooker all the best in his new section, and voicing my disgust at the torrent of abuse thrown at him over the last few months. For those who were so intent on writing abusive letters, I hope you're all happy – you've ruined many people's enjoyment of what was actually a very amusing, tongue in cheek feature.

J Lewis

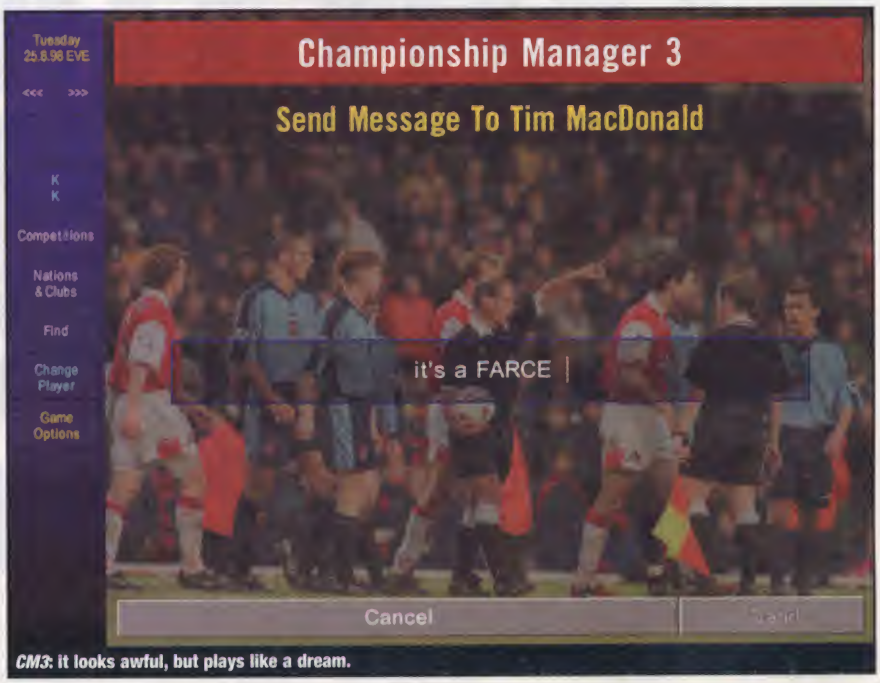
It was actually Charlie's decision to discontinue Sick Notes, as he felt it had gone as far as it could and he didn't want it to become a parody of its former hilarious self. But worry not, he is working on a new column which is equally hilarious, the results of which you will see for the first time next issue.

CM3 TRIUMPHS

I was amazed, but also happy to read that *Championship Manager 3* is officially the fastest-selling PC game of all time. It's good to see that in this age of 3D accelerator cards a game as graphically basic as *CM3* can be so popular, as well as addictive. Your review was spot on, and it's great that the basic visuals didn't influence your assessment. It just goes to show that flashy graphics aren't everything, and that good gameplay is far more important than impressive sprites. Far too many games try to stun people by looking good, but all too often are a pile of shit. Surely there's no point making a great-looking game which challenges your machine but fails to challenge your imagination. As well as being insulting to us gamers, buying games which appear excellent on the surface but lack any true substance potentially costs a great deal of money.

O Hamilton

For another example of excellent gameplay laughing in the face of graphical pomposity, see our *Ultima Online* review on page 82. PCZ



***CM3*: it looks awful, but plays like a dream.**

TOP STORY

GTA 2 will feature vast amounts of ugly, wanton violence.

START THE CAR...

GRAND THEFT AUTO 2

Driving around causing havoc and wasting anyone who gets in your way ain't big and it ain't clever. Mind you, it's a hell of a lot of fun

COP KILLER Steve Hill

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER DMA Design
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive
WEBSITE www.gta2.com
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE October

IN SUMMARY

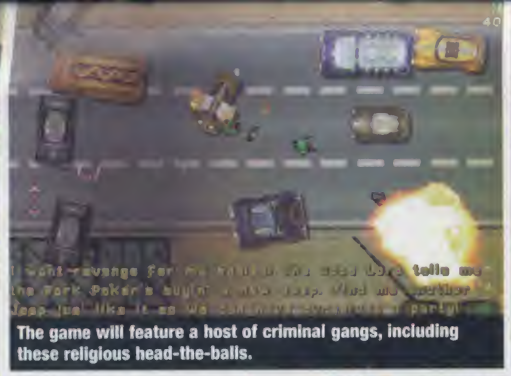
GTA receives an overhaul and becomes darker, more sinister and hopefully more violent and sick.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The big deal is that it's the sequel to *Grand Theft Auto*, one of the most original games of recent years.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Thanks to PlayStation owners, who will be getting a version of their own, *GTA 2* will not be the 3D-spinny-rotatey joyride we all hoped for.



The game will feature a host of criminal gangs, including these religious head-the-balls.

The weapons in *GTA 2* include tazers, Molotov cocktails, grenades, microwave guns, water cannons and land mines.

Another day, another pile-up.

Step out of line and the police will be all over you like a cheap suit.

New vehicles will include an ice cream van, hot dog van, SWAT van, functioning taxis and buses, garbage truck, hearse, highly explosive chemical/petrol tankers, and articulated lorries.

An old adage maintains that there's no such thing as bad publicity. Although a number of Tory MPs might disagree, considerable weight is added to the argument by the case of 1997's *Grand Theft Auto* (*PCZ* #58, 92%). A graphically primitive top-down driving game, little was known about it until the intervention of PR guru Max Clifford. Within weeks, his shrewd tactics had convinced a slew of gullible tabloid editors to effectively run free adverts for the game in the form of incensed editorial, citing its horrific content as a potential catalyst to disorder on a global scale. TV was also suckered, with the game's moral implications discussed on *Newsnight*, *News At Ten*, and even the execrable *GMTV*.

The outrage continued. "Beneath contempt," barked a Police Federation spokesman. "In real life, this behaviour causes untold misery and wrecks people's lives," added MP Nigel Griffiths. "We simply cannot allow children and young people to be given the idea that car crime or joyriding is in any way an acceptable or an enjoyable thing to do," offered Lord Campbell of Croy. The result? *GTA* sold by the shedload. No surprises there. However, let's not ignore the fact that it was an extremely playable game offering, above all, originality.

So, how to provide a sequel, which by definition can't be wholly original. Unsurprisingly, the basic premise is the same, although the setting is markedly different, the action taking place in a dark, sinister metropolis on the verge of a breakdown due to political corruption and gang warfare. DMA have attempted a darker and more atmospheric style than in *GTA*, giving the game a twilight feel with the aid of American retro-cars and industrial areas.

The biggest change in terms of gameplay is the advent of gang warfare, which though implied in the first game has now been fully realised. Gangs operate in different areas of the city, and each has its own characteristics, businesses, modes of operation, vehicles, and attitudes towards each other, as well as towards you the player. Some gangs will arbitrarily kill or kidnap pedestrians, drug deals will take place, and gang warfare will occasionally break out. In effect, the gangs now hand out the missions, and having earned their respect you're able to take missions from any of these gangs, at the risk of incurring the wrath of the others.

"The biggest change in terms of gameplay is the advent of gangs, which though implied in the first game has now been fully realised"

As for vehicles available, the number has almost doubled, and they can now carry multiple passengers, each vehicle having a defined capacity. The role of the pedestrians has also been overhauled, and they are no longer the passive bystanders of the first game, with many of them able to fight back. Naturally, the police are ever present, but are now aided by the FBI, SWAT teams and the military. Fortunately, an explosive array of new weaponry is provided with which to fend them off.

GTA 2 looks like being everything *GTA* was and more. And rest assured we will be bringing you the latest as soon as we can – or at least before the tabloids.

TOP STORY

A real eye-popping experience, a dead cert for success, corpse and robbers...

THE GHOUL IS OUT THERE, TRUST NOCTURNE

The nightmares keep us awake all night. Or at least that's our excuse for never getting to the office on time

IN THE DARK Mark Hill

Only dead people dance to the Bee Gees.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Terminal Reality/Gathering of Developers
PUBLISHER Take 2
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE October 31 (Hallowe'en)

IN SUMMARY

It's a third-person action adventure, inspired by horror film classics and best described as a mix of *Resident Evil*, *X-Files* (the series, not the crap game) and *Discworld Noir*.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

It's got an involving storyline set in the Thirties, featuring a cast of werewolves, vampires, zombies and other monsters, and the visuals are amazing. It's about time developers woke up to the attraction of horror and *Nocturne* looks set to make trousers everywhere extremely uncomfortable.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

We may be overestimating PC players' fascination for horror games, and many may bemoan the fact that it's not a first-person shoot 'em up.

Nocturne will set the world on fire this Hallowe'en.

Don't mess with the Stranger.

Play this game with the lights out. If you dare.

There are far too many films we'd like to do this to.

Who's afraid of the big, bad, savage, evil wolf?

The use of light and darkness in *Nocturne* pushes the levels of atmosphere to hitherto uncharted depths.

There aren't enough horror-based computer games. For a medium that relies so heavily on creating a tense atmosphere, pumping the player with adrenalin and turning a couple of hours in front of a monitor into a memorable experience, the PC games market has produced remarkably few horror titles.

Adventures like *Phantasmagoria*, *The 7th Guest* and *Gabriel Knight* are hardly milestones in gaming history, while the more effective *Resident Evil* series is really a PlayStation game (like *Silent Hill*). If you're after some real scares on your desktop, you need to look towards the pure action of 3D shoot 'em ups *Half-Life* and *Aliens Vs Predator*, where screaming like a second-rate actress becomes a common occurrence.

What we want is a dark and gritty game, full of zombies, vampires and werewolves, plenty of gore and dangling limbs and graphics to – quite literally – die for. And that's exactly what *Nocturne* is.

Set in the 1930s, in the era of Prohibition, you can play either as the gun-wielding Stranger (a mysterious fellow who looks like a private eye, complete with shabby raincoat) or the close combat specialist Doc Holliday, a woman of scientific genius. Both belong to Spookhouse, a government organisation established at the turn of the century by Theodore Roosevelt to investigate paranormal activities and confront the evil legions of darkness (well, you wouldn't expect them to be friendly, would you?).

"Dead monsters don't vanish from the scenery, and neither does their blood, so other creatures can track you down by following your trail"

There are bucketloads of NPCs to interact with, including other members of Spookhouse, who will aid you on your way. Among these are a Cajun voodoo master, a former heavyweight boxer and a half-vampire, all of whom boast unique abilities that will help you to progress through the game. There are missions to complete and objects to use and collect, but you don't need to do things in order – you have the freedom to go off exploring and relieving the world of monsters in the most amusing ways you can think of, if that's what you want to do.

It all sounds very good, and it looks even better. Terminal Reality have created an amazing engine that will undoubtedly be used by other developers over the next year, and which caused our jaws to drop in a dribbling mess when we saw it in action. The backgrounds are pre-rendered, but everything else (such as lightning, shadows, fog and reflections) is in real time. We commented on how good the animation of the Stranger's flapping coat is, only to be told that it flutters in real time according to the movements of the character. No matter how much action there is, you can count on shadows playing out everyone's motions against the walls or floor, and the way you uncover darkness gradually with your flashlight is nail-bitingly gorgeous. On one level, you start in total darkness, until you turn on your torch and start waving it about the room, desperately trying to work out where those growls are coming from.

Dead monsters don't vanish from the scenery, and neither does their blood, so other creatures can track you down by following your trail. Your weapons leave their mark, too, and you can even spell your name on the wall with machine-gun bullets. *Nocturne* has certainly made an impression on us, and we'll bring you an in-depth preview very soon.

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SHARP
PlayStation
PC CD

www.easports.com

If I could have scored any Premier League goal last season it would have been Scholesy's effort against Liverpool.
Little ginger fella pops up on the edge of the box and just buries it!
The ball screams through the air like a Cruise missile right into the top corner.
If Friedel had got there, it would have ripped his arm off.
Not bad for a ginger!

James Watson. Salford.

If it's in the game, it's in the game.™
EA SPORTS

Score the goal of your dreams in the game of your dreams.

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THAT'S SHOWBUSINESS

NEWS EDITOR Richie Shoemaker

Over the last year there have been some worrying events in the games industry: Virgin Interactive went through some dark days, eventually pairing up with Interplay. Interplay then teamed up with French publishers Titus. In the meantime, Grolier Interactive decided to focus on development rather than publishing, Microids offloaded their wares onto Codemasters, and Take 2 found themselves picking over Telstar's bones. Even Interactive Magic decided to cut their losses and concentrate solely on online games.

It doesn't end there. Psygnosis' PC games have gone to GT Interactive, with the Liverpool studio finally being assimilated into Sony. Gremlin moved into Infogrames' house, and Blue Byte have shut their UK office altogether. Late last year Hasbro bought MicroProse and are soon to snap up Europress. Now GT Interactive are in trouble after losing $51million in the last year. Where will it end?

With a handful of big companies churning out substandard sequels, if the doom merchants are to be believed the small players will be squeezed into small independent channels with a handful of games that might just make the Top 50. The word on the street is that originality is no longer a prerequisite for games developers – publishers will only sign up games if they're going to make big money, apparently.

Like any industry, the games business is going through a transition period. But at the end of the day it's a business. Publishers who make money usually have good games behind them; those that don't, don't. Some may see this as a worrying trend, but the fact is that some games are great, some are terrible – no matter if they have *Quake*, *C&C* or *II* in the title or not. If you continually release crap, you'll soon be in a world of it. It's as simple as that.

THE PCZONE CHARTS

What's in, out, up and down

P.24

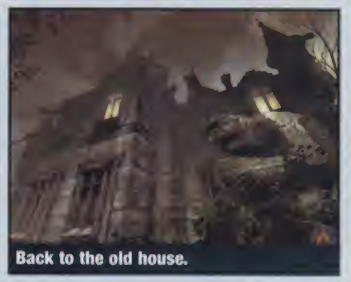
ChartTrack

TECH-HEAD

Fighting for a share of the 3D graphics and sound market

P.29

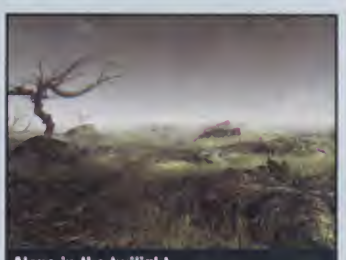
Third-person adventures will no longer be the sole preserve of PSX owners.



Back to the old house.

Ed ditches his dinner jacket for *Alone In The Dark 4*.

Torchlight on 2D rendered backgrounds.



Alone in the twilight.

ALONE IN THE DARK AGAIN

Alone In The Dark, the French 3D adventure loosely based on HP Lovecraft's Victorian gothic horror tales, provided the first real alternative to the point-and-click adventure. Paving the way for two more sequels, it was without doubt the single influence for both *Resident Evil* games, *Silent Hill* and LucasArts' most recent comedy adventure *Grim Fandango*.

Nowadays it may not be the best, but not so *Alone In The Dark 4*, which hopes to take back the crown from its pretenders, as once again you're invited to take control of Edward Carnby as he battles the forces of darkness. There's far more tension than in previous games of the series, with moody sound and lighting washing across the pre-rendered backgrounds.

French developers Darkworks are keen to point out that while the game won't feature the blood and guts of more recent like-minded games, the music and graphics will keep you on the edge of your seat. In their own words: "The game will not be gore but will be as scary as hell!"

Alone In the Dark 4 will be released some time next year through Infogrames.

UK PC GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS
News from the qualifying rounds leading up to the Grand Final
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MAN WHO KNOWS
The very latest industry gossip
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CONSOLE ZONE
Microsoft team up with Konami; Sega take on Sony and Nintendo
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HOTSHOTS
A sneak preview of up-and-coming game releases
P36

SWEET FA

It's been a cruel cruel summer, but that's almost over for football management fans

Every other summer, without a European Championship or a World Cup to watch, football fans experience what can only be termed a drought. While the nation's clubs spend the summer throwing around enough money to keep Gazza in beer and fags for a lifetime, five separate software developers are getting ready for the competition of the new season – and the winner seems far from certain.

EA's offering is *FA Premier League Football Manager 2000* which, like last year's edition, with its usual banal assortment of burger bar management options, is likely to be the most attractive of the bunch. With a new 3D engine and the introduction of in-game hotkeys to facilitate swift tactical manoeuvres from the bench, we only hope that the AI is improved considerably from the previous version. If it is, *FA Manager* could finally prove to be a decent alternative to *CM3*.

Likewise with Gremlin's (now Infogrames') *Premier Manager* series which, according to one company representative, is certain to continue in one form or other. However, with their own 'official' footie sim *UEFA Manager* still waiting on the bench, there may be some wait. *UEFA Manager*, rather than being bogged down in stats and obscure teams the likes of only Steve Hill supports, enables you to take the reins of the big European clubs as you strive to pick up the major European silverware. Like EA's game, financial options abound – if you like that kind of thing.

"If you're in any way a *Championship Manager* fan, maybe you should take a look at *Tactical Manager 2*, a mid-price (£20), feature-filled clone"

And so to the mid-table games. Both Anco (*Player Manager 98/99*) and Ubi Soft (*Football World Manager*) are updating their management games. *Player Manager 2000*, looking to iron out the bugs that dogged the previous game, looks like it could finally deliver on its promise to create a stat-heavy game that presents the stats in a more visual way. *Football World Manager 2000*, on the other hand, is going for a much-needed redesign of its interface, with a massive international database of teams and more interactive match day options.

But it's *CM3* that everyone wants to know about (isn't it?), and according to publishers Eidos we can expect a full season update in the autumn which will include minor bug fixes, an editor (maybe) and a few minor tweaks in the code to make the game run smoother and faster.

And if you're in any way a *Championship Manager* fan, maybe you should take a look at *Tactical Manager 2*, a mid-price (£20), feature-filled clone that may not look as attractive as *CM3*, but includes a massive 1,052 teams. The big draw is the online support, with updates, logos and player photos all available from the website (**www.talking-birds.co.uk**). There will even be links to official club websites and play-by-email games. And there will be no – repeat *no* – hot dog stalls.

From our experience, it's the *Champ Manager 3* update that will probably be the prime choice for PC armchair managers, with EA's game almost certain to be the most attractive. While the others will have to pull a few hat tricks out of the bag to give *CM3* a run for its money, *Tactical Manager 2* could well be the dark horse of the season.

It is, as they say, a funny old game.

FOOTBALL FOCUS

Games coming off the bench and into the starting line-up

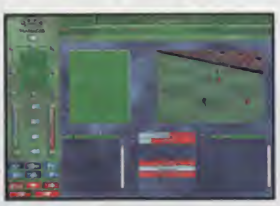
FA PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL MANAGER 2000 (EA)
Out October.
New 3D engine and match day interface. 30,000 players, 23 divisions in 7 countries. Financial management options.

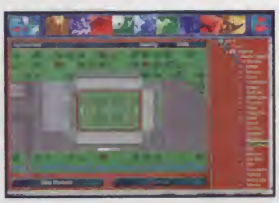
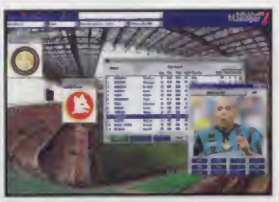
UEFA MANAGER (Infogrames)
Out October.
35,000 players, 770 clubs, 46 European leagues, 3D match options and financial management. Official UEFA endorsement.

PLAYER MANAGER 2000 (Anco)
Out November.
20,000 players. Improved match options, player/manager intelligence and player feedback.

FOOTBALL WORLD MANAGER 2000 (Ubi Soft)
Out November.
29,000 players, 1,400 clubs, 95 divisions in 70 countries. Updated interface including more match day options.

TACTICAL MANAGER 2 (Brightstar)
Out August.
32,000 players, 1000 clubs, 60 divisions, massive online support and multiplayer gaming.



Let's hope we don't end up with a zombie version.

So that's what Ruud Gullit gets up to in Newcastle.

Careful, you'll have someone's eye out!

Hot three-way action.

BLOODY STAINLESS

Arena AD from the makers of *Carmageddon*

Just before the release of *Carmageddon II*, Matt Sullivan let slip that Stainless' next project, which had been under way for quite some time, would be a beat 'em up. At the time, scenes of one-legged barbarians whacking each other with severed limbs sprang to mind, and by the look on Matt's face we weren't too far from the truth.

Now, almost a year later, Stainless have 'come out', in true Stephen Gately fashion, revealing their love for big, burly men – and women – in leather thongs, spoiling for a fight.

As a slave in gladiatorial Rome, the aim in *Arena* is to amass wealth by slaughtering anyone who'll take you on. The more contests you win, the bigger the purse, with a view to finally gaining your freedom. Edging in RPG elements, *Arena* enables you to buy new weapons, heal your wounds and learn new skills between each bloody bout. And they will be bloody. Choosing from 18 different fighters, each of which is prone to losing the odd limb, we're promised buckets – nay, rivers – of gore. To amuse the baying crowd, beating your opponent to death with their own severed arm is sure to help pay the rent. Not only do you have to win, it seems, you also have to win in style.

With the *Carmageddon* mantle having passed down to fresh blood, Stainless are making it their duty to move into tired genres, aiming to revive them with their own brand of tortured humour. No doubt *Arena AD* will be a good laugh – that's if they remember to add the blood and guts missing from these screenshots before Christmas.

SOUL FIGHTER

Rather than taking an over-the-top humorous approach, French developers Toka are taking a more traditional route for their arcade-style beat 'em up *Soul Fighter*, a 3D fantasy action game that combines a ton of swordplay with a touch of exploration. Keenly awaited by some console watchers, the game is likely to cause less of a stir on the PC when it's released in September. Although, to be fair, beat 'em ups on the PC have been few and far between, and good ones even less so.

***Soul Fighter* offers more than six sprawling levels, each ending with the usual boss character, with 40 different enemy types and three characters to choose from. As well as fists, weapons include axes, crossbows and magic spells. Unfortunately there's little in the way of gore, at least compared to *Arena AD*, and no multiplayer options are planned. But if you like your fighting games fast and full of combo moves, *Soul Fighter* could be the game for you.**

First-person mode: handy for throwing daggers.

Plenty of moves, if you like that sort of thing.

A scene straight out of an Indiana Jones movie.

SHORTS

RELIC UNEARTHED

Responsible for the forthcoming space-based RTS *Homeworld* (which rocks, by the way), Relic Entertainment are already working on their next secret project which, by their own words, "makes *Homeworld* look like Tinker Toys". Our hope is for an official *Battlestar Galactica* tie-in. What we get will probably be entirely different, although another real-time strategy game is likely.

TOUGH TITUS

Costing slightly more than a dollar, the ever expanding French publishers Titus have bought up the rights to develop *Robocop* games. What form these games will take is unknown, although we can exclusively predict that a first-person shooter is more likely than a turn-based strategy game. Earlier this year Titus bought a controlling stake in US publishers Interplay, the ones pulling the strings at Virgin Interactive. Titus are rapidly becoming a force to be reckoned with in the gaming world.

LARA & SARA

Titan books have just released *Covenant*, a graphic novel starring Lara Croft of *Tomb Raider* fame, and Sara Pezzini, 'NYPD cop and supernatural avenger', aka Witchblade. Costing £9.99, the book offers a first for Lara fans as she peels off her trademark khakis and slips into an improbable red dress. The book will soon be followed by *Ceremony*, although whether Sara will be appearing in *Tomb Raider IV* remains to be seen.

DEUTSCHE RTS

As if from nowhere, *Mayday* appears. Pipping *C&C: Tiberian Sun* to the shelves, *Mayday* is an isometric real-time strategy game featuring three distinct human sides in a global 21st century war across 40 missions. With 50 types of units on offer, *Mayday* has already been favourably received in Germany, selling over 100,000 copies. But then what do they know. We should have a review next issue, on sale Thursday 26 August.

Danger, sheep crossing.

Leave sheep unattended in the techno club and they'll start dancing

Down on the farm, it's feeding time for your woolly flock.

WORRYING SHEEP

A new game called *Sheep* is Empire Interactive's attempt to revive the style of gameplay established by the classic *Lemmings*. A top-down affair, the idea is to herd various breeds of woolly mammals around 16 levels incorporating a 'happy factory', the Titanic and a nightclub. Choosing one of four herders, you must overcome various obstacles and diversions, such as electric fences, arcade games and other animals. To control your furry flock, you use sticks, treats, stealthy manoeuvres and even voice commands.

Located deep in the English countryside, developers Mind's Eye confess to having plenty of reference material at their fingertips: "Several months were spent studying sheep and village idiots in order to perfect the code." Now that's dedication. Worrying indeed...

Sheep is due to be released before Christmas.

SEGA MEGA DRIVE

Sega's flagship Dreamcast driving game, *Sega Rally 2*, is being ported to the PC and should be out in September alongside its console companion. With more than 18 tracks and 18 cars – the obligatory weather effects are included – it'll have a tough race on its hands with Gremlin's *Rally Masters* (more fun), Europress's *Rally 99* (more sim) and Infogrames' *V-Rally 2* (more sequel), all on the way around the same time. You could of course just play it safe with Codemasters' classic *Colin McRae Rally* (*PCZ* #68, 93%), which is being rushed to budget on September 3.

Being a Dreamcast game, *Sega Rally 2* will look the business.

Take part in a career mode that spans ten years.

ONLINE DIARY

Half-Life modifications – where to get them and what they do

WORDS Phil Wand

HALF-LIFE MODS

If you thought *Team Fortress Classic* was wow, suck on this lot

It's a question we get asked rather a lot – *what's a mod?* A mod is an add-on that transforms an existing game into something else, usually by adding new characters, surroundings, elements, sounds and gameplay. *Team Fortress Classic* is a mod that uses the graphical heart of *Half-Life* to pump out the action but packs its own lunch of new visuals, new weapons, new multiplayer content and new sounds.

Anyone who's played either *Team Fortress Classic* or *Half-Life* online will no doubt have noticed a number of other game variations creeping in. Several servers, BT Wireplay included, are now running a popular mod called *Counter-Strike*. What is it, and where do you get it? What about this other *Cold Ice* you've seen? Fear not. Here we provide a quick overview of the top *Half-Life* mods.

Meet my bitch bomb, primed and ready for action.

COLD ICE

Essentially a turbo-charged version of *Half-Life*, *Cold Ice* contains fun new elements such as an extra-violent crowbar, *Doom* chaingun, explosive-tipped bullets, grenade chucker, slime thrower and the thermonuclear warhead launcher. Snarks are now rats, grenades are cluster grenades (much like the *Team Fortress Classic* MIRVs) and satchel packs are now bitch bombs. It's total mayhem.
www.halflife.org/coldice

OZ DEATHMATCH

Designed specifically for people running *Half-Life* game servers, *Oz Deathmatch* adds a whole bunch of configuration options, a grappling hook, and *Quake*-like power-ups . Mess about in its configuration files and you can get down to the serious nitty-gritty of multiplayer gameplay – change the magazine size for any particular weapon, how much blood appears and even how much recoil the player suffers when pulling the trigger.
www.planethalflife.com/aftershock/oz

COUNTER-STRIKE

Take on the terrorists or shoot the hostages. Or perhaps both. New locations include mansions and airports; new weapons include the Sig SSG-3000 sniper rifle and assault guns. Levels have different goals including hostage rescue, assassination, massacre your opponents, and so on. The hostages themselves are a bit dim, and the play balance is a bit suspect but the author ensures us that these issues will be addressed in future releases.
www.planethalflife.com/counterstrike

DMPLUS

Like *OZ Deathmatch*, *DMPlus* is a collection of tweaks enabling different fire modes, fully customisable server settings, grappling hook, cloaking device and a lot more besides. The machine-gun now has a silenced fire feature, plus hand grenades are now cluster bombs. Everything's accessible from 17 new configuration pages within the *Half-Life* menu system.
www.planethalflife.com/dmplus

Man in a balaclava.

WHAT'S ON AT WIREPLAY

HALF-LIFE Those nice chaps at Wireplay are now running the *Half-Life Counter-Strike* mod (see main story). Download the *Counter Strike* software, update your master server list in *Half-Life*, *GameSpy* or *PingTool* and look for the Wireplay games. Double-click to join in.

UNREAL Two new servers are dishing out new *Unreal* maps. Epic's game was originally a bit lame when it came to multiplayer, but recent patches have improved things no end. Make sure you've got all the relevant updates and join in the fun.

SKINS Visit the recently opened Skin Emporium, stocking all manner of new, free, downloadable characters for *Half-Life*. Links from the home page.

They're all at www.wireplay.co.uk

Wireplay
The games network from BT

Online Diary is sponsored by BT Wireplay

WORD ON THE NEWSGROUPS

alt.games.half-life.tfclassic

A quick fix for Voodoo Banshee and RAGE Fury owners who are experiencing painfully slow menu fades in *Half-Life* and *Half-Life* mods.

1. Click the Start button and click Run.
2. Type 'regedit' (without the quotes) and press Enter.
3. Open the HKEY_CURRENT_USER registry branch.
4. Find the Software\Valve\Half-Life\Settings folder.
5. Locate the CPUMHZ value.
6. Double-click on it, and enter 1 as the new value.

creative.products.3d_blaster.riva_tnt2

Quake and other similar titles running appalling slowly on your spanking new TNT2 card? Change the AGP Aperture Size in your system BIOS to 64Mb and everything should be hunky-dory.

GO HERE NOW

Q3Test

In case you've been living under a rock or in a deep cave for the past four months, the PC version of *Quake III Arena Test* is now available for free download. Originally for the Macintosh platform only (the idea being to give PC manufacturers time to get their OpenGL drivers in order), downloads are now available for Linux and Windows.
www.quake3arena.com

Q3Test: now available for free download.

AlteredWorlds

A fancy OpenGL screensaver that will have your 3D accelerator on its knees and pleading for mercy. The visuals were developed on a Riva TNT-based system but should work on your ATI RAGE, 3Dfx Voodoo, Savage 4 or indeed any other OpenGL-compatible controller set. The developers are planning to release what they call a *SaverGame*, where PC users can actually 'take part' in their screensaver.
www.alteredworlds.com

SETI@home

Join the worldwide search for bug-eyed green monsters. Download a client program from the project website and leave your PC munching on data from radio telescopes around the planet. The idea is to harness the incredible computing power of technology all around us, rather than investing billions of dollars in a big dinosaur that'll sit in the corner of an air-conditioned hangar for six years before producing the result everyone was expecting anyway.
setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu

Mighty modem

PlanetQuake have recently updated their Tech Tips section to help you get maximum thrust from your 56Kpbs modem. Not only applicable to *Quake*, you should find you get smoother play from any other online game. Well worth a visit.
www.planetquake.com/techtips

Turbo 3D

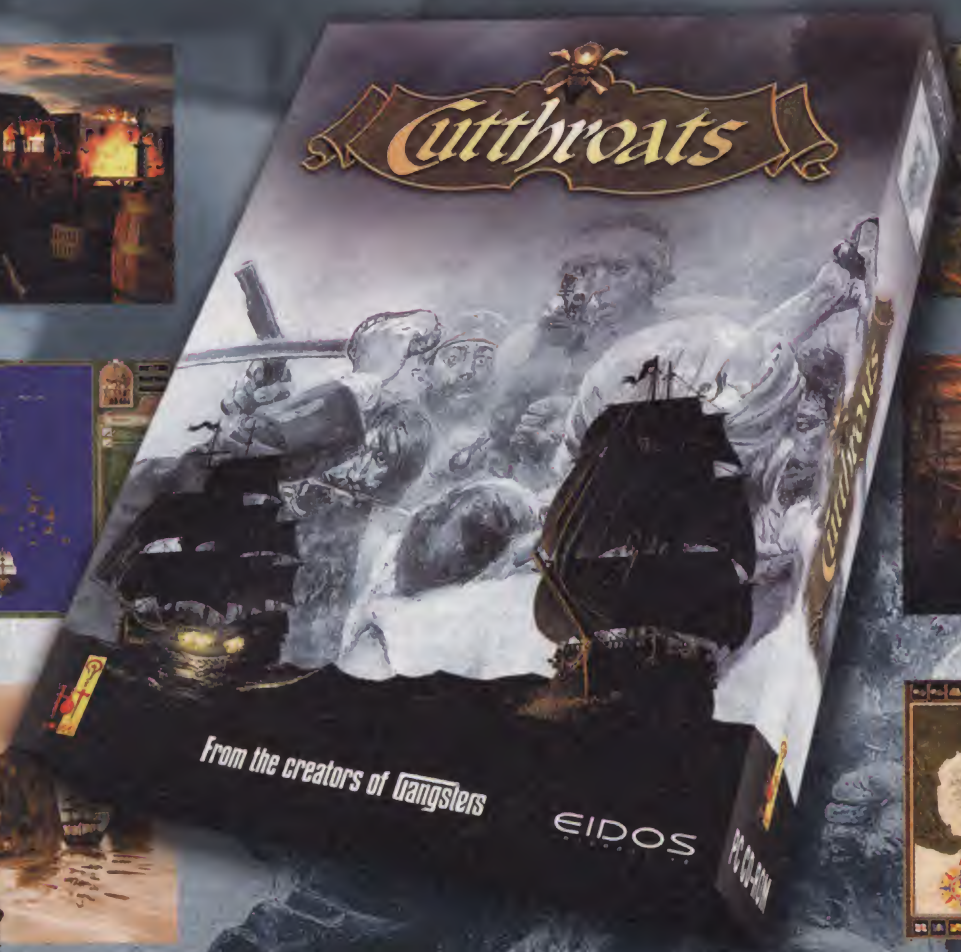
Want to get your 166MHz Voodoo3 running at 180MHz without spending any more money? Then get along to Tweak3D. The site contains all manner of information relating to 3D acceleration and how to thrash the living crap out of your current card. Comparison reviews and articles are essential reading, plus there's a huge library of the latest drivers.
www.tweak3d.net

Kitchen Games

A list of hopelessly moronic things to do in your kitchen – actually, make that someone else's kitchen – when you're bored. Ever wanted to get a hard-boiled egg into a wine bottle (and out again)? What about making a bowl of convincing ectoplasm? It's all here. Which is more than can be said for the author.
freeweb.pdq.net/headstrong

Cutthroats

Flint, Shot And Two Smoking Cannons!



Wealth is the name of the game and if you haven't got it...steal it.

Raid, pillage and plunder your way to infamy on the bounty-laden seas of the 17th century Caribbean. Strike terror into the hearts of your victims, capture ships and ravage towns.

Will you survive to retire a Pirate King, or end your days by dancing death's jig on Gallows Rock?

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"If Cutthroats isn't worth its weight in gold, we'll cut our own throats" **PC Zone**

PC CD

From the creators of Gangsters

EIDOS INTERACTIVE

www.eidos.com

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CHARTS

All you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload, plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what *you* think

***Aliens Vs Predator*: the scariest game you can buy.**

THE Virgin MEGASTORES TOP10

JUL	AUG	TITLE	LABEL	GROUP	REVIEW SCORE
-	1	**ALIENS VS PREDATOR**	FOX INTERACTIVE	ELECTRONIC ARTS	91%
-	2	DUNGEON KEEPER II	BULLFROG	ELECTRONIC ARTS	94%
-	3	TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS	GT INTERACTIVE	GT INTERACTIVE	94%
-	4	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS	TALONSOFT	TAKE 2	91%
-	5	OUTCAST	INFOGRAMES	INFOGRAMES	65%
1	6	MECHWARRIOR 3	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	85%
5	7	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3	EIDOS	EIDOS	93%
2	8	STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	89%
-	9	MIGHT & MAGIC VII	3DO	UBI SOFT	*NOT REVIEWED*
6	10	STAR WARS: EPISODE I – RACER	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	78%

THE ChartTrack TOP10 ELSPA

JUL	AUG	TITLE	LABEL	GROUP	REVIEW SCORE
-	1	ALIENS VS PREDATOR	FOX INTERACTIVE	ELECTRONIC ARTS	91%
-	2	DUNGEON KEEPER II	BULLFROG	ELECTRONIC ARTS	94%
-	3	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS	TALONSOFT	TAKE 2	91%
-	4	TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS	GT INTERACTIVE	GT INTERACTIVE	94%
3	5	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3	EIDOS	EIDOS	93%
-	6	OUTCAST	INFOGRAMES	INFOGRAMES	65%
1	7	SW: THE PHANTOM MENACE	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	78%
2	8	ST: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	89%
4	9	ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	87%
-	10	MECHWARRIOR 3	MICROPROSE	HASBRO	85%

(Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA 1999)

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

"Woah, *Star Trek* beats *Star Wars*! Has the backlash started already? Great to see *Hidden & Dangerous* chart so highly. It's superb – it picks off *Rainbow Six* from a mile away, and takes out *Delta Force* with a well-placed mine."
Maxster, Oxford

"I was disappointed with *TA: Kingdoms*. I thought the scale was a bit off and the graphics lacked the en-masse style of the original game, and generally it looked muddy, as I couldn't get it to work with my 3D card."
Brian Hodge, Birmingham

"My reckoning is that *Outcast* is at number six only because there have been hardly any reviews of it yet. Of course, by the time the reviews are out something else will be claiming the number one spot (probably *Kingpin* or *Unreal Tournament*). Well, I'll review it right now in just three words: *Outcast* is superb."
sINk, Leeds

"*Aliens Vs Predator* – it's sooooo much fun being a baddie. I haven't had this much fun since *TIE Fighter*. I seem to be getting strange cravings for human brains."
Robbo, South Wales

"At a time more noted for the inherent lack of quality, a whole heap of top games popped out of the bag this month. Now the only problem is, which should I get? *Outcast* (whatever you might say), *AvP* and *DK2* probably. Good to see *Rollercoaster Tycoon* hanging on. I bought it recently and I'm completely hooked."
The Frew, Middlesbrough

CHART COMMENT

Kingpin **has finally made it past the censors, only to come out too late to steal the thunder of *Aliens Vs Predator*.**

Some high-quality releases have poached the top spots, all of which are likely to stay in the charts for a couple of months. For once it seems the Top 10 is in a very healthy state, with *Outcast* being the only duff entry. Many of you seem to have taken the game to your hearts, lost, it seems, in the its 'depth and beauty'. Here in the office, it is the top five that are still being played regularly, along with the superb *Driver*-esque *Midtown Madness*, which for some reason is only at number 16. It's doing better than newly released *Heavy Gear 2* though, which debuts at 72. Which is nice.

Richie Shoemaker

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...
1 Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines *(Eidos)*
2 Final Fantasy VII *(Eidos)*
3 World Cup 98 *(EA Sports)*
4 Unreal *(GT Interactive)*
5 International Cricket Captain *(Empire)*

2 YEARS AGO...
1 Carmageddon *(SCI)*
2 Theme Hospital *(EA)*
3 X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter *(Virgin)*
4 C&C: Red Alert *(Virgin)*
5 FIFA Soccer Manager *(EA)*

5 YEARS AGO...
1 Theme Park *(EA)*
2 The 7th Guest/Dune *(Telstar)*
3 Rebel Assault *(LucasArts/US Gold)*
4 Animals *(Action 16)*
5 David Leadbetter's Golf/F1 Grand Prix *(MicroProse)*

COMPETITION

WIN THE ENTIRE VIRGIN TOP 10!

PC ZONE **and Virgin have teamed up to give you the chance to win every game in the current Top 10. All you have to do to enter the draw is answer this simple question:**

Question: On which console did the original *Aliens Vs Predator* game first come out?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with with *all* the information requested, to the address below

- *Name / Address / Postcode / Daytime phone number / Email / Job title / Company name / Age if under 18*
- *Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies*
- *Are you a current subscriber to* PC ZONE*?*

Send your answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (80), 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. Closing date: Thursday 12 August

- *Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The Ed's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply. Capiche?*

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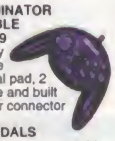

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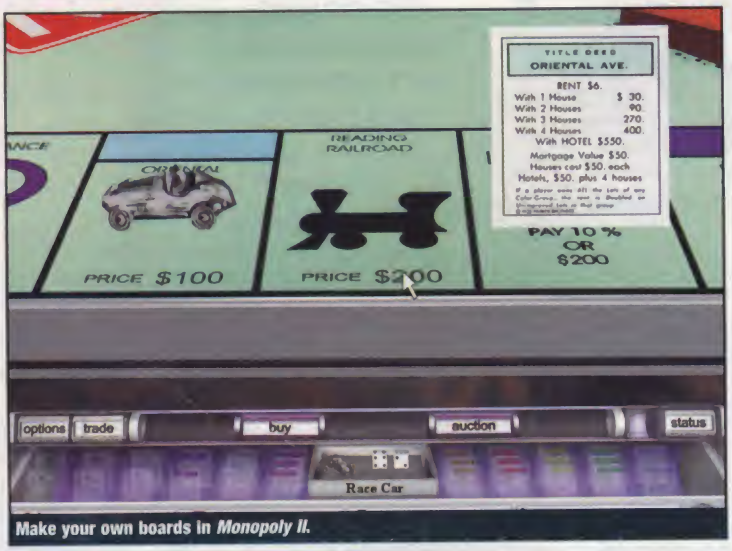
BOARD MEETING

Classic tabletop games come to the PC

Hasbro Interactive have quietly been churning out board game conversions for a number of years, most of them mediocre, and a few (eg *Star Wars Monopoly*) truly terrible. Unfazed, Hasbro have just released *Upwords*, and in the space of a few months plan to have a good many more faithful recreations of long nights by the fire, rolling dice and being cheated out of fake money. Throughout September and October we should see *Diplomacy*, *Risk II*, *Cluedo Chronicles*, *Trivial Pursuit: Millennium Edition* and *Monopoly II* – all of which look like being quite good if you like that sort of thing.



Make your own boards in *Monopoly II*.

Triv now has a deathmatch mode.

Risk II with nifty spinning globe.

Cluedo Chronicles: more adventure than board game.

"May I suggest we dive."

It'll be like shooting big ducks in an immense barrel.

SUB GAMES

Strategy-mad developers SSI are currently working on *Silent Hunter II*, a WWII submarine sim that lets you replay all your favourite scenes from *Das Boot* from the comfort of your own PC. You have to provide the ever-present feeling of claustrophobia and paranoia yourself, but with a new 3D engine, fully dynamic campaign, a scenario editor and loads of interactive background material, the game should just about fulfil every submariner's dream when it arrives this autumn through Mindscape.

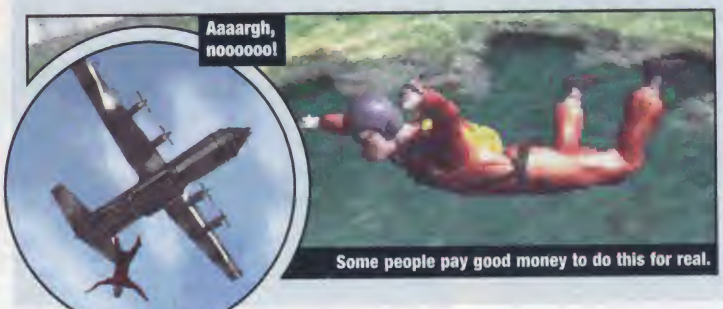
Footnote: NovaLogic are also working on a sub sequel of their own, *Wolf Pack 2*.

EA IN FREE FALL

Recreating the feel of wind rushing through your hair as you plummet to earth has had mixed results in the past, from a bloody mess of flesh and bone in the real world, and poor gameplay in the virtual one. EA hope to eliminate both with *Skydive!*, a simulation of one of the most pant-browning extreme sports known to man.

Three modes of play will be available: Landing Accuracy, Target Course and Freefly. The first is self-explanatory, the second is a fly-through-the-hoops race, and the third an acrobatic dive to accrue the most points.

Currently targeted as a mid-price ($20/£12.50) game in the States, no UK release has yet been confirmed.



Some people pay good money to do this for real.

CODE RED

A Russian guard with a stutter? He's obviously been on the Stolly.

Having relieved Telstar of their games publishing duties, Take 2 have taken over the reins with *Codename: Eagle*, a game that looked like a simple WWI *Quake*-style shooter when we first saw it a year ago, but that now looks a lot more promising.

The year is 1900, the place pre-revolution Russia. You play Red, an operative with Shadow Command, and your task is to halt the plans of the young Tsar who has plans to invade Western Europe with his big burly army of vodka-swilling Bolsheviks.

Although *Codename: Eagle* is essentially a *Quake*-style action game, it boasts a number of vehicles that can be driven across the 12 missions. You'll be able to drive around in biplanes, airships and boats, and there'll be the usual range of weapons to pick up and fire indiscriminately. To progress you'll have to use many objects (hundreds, apparently) over and above the usual coloured keys to complete a number of puzzles, as well as talk to various characters. While the graphics are hardly cutting edge, *Codename: Eagle* promises a hell of a lot more than its contemporaries. Whether it lives up to those expectations, we shall see come September.

Upwardly mobile in WWI.

Ooh! Right in the Cossacks.

No evidence of curves or shadows, but then does *Quake III* have adventure? Nope.

SHORTS

DAVID SOUL

Eidos' third-person adventure *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* – the one starring David Bowie – has been renamed *The Nomad Soul*. The Omikron bit was dropped from the title because, at three syllables, the marketing drones were overloading their brains chanting 'ohm' over and over again.

GET YER SKATES ON

Either EA are running late with their April Fool's jokes this year or they really *are* releasing an official figure skating simulation this autumn. We shouldn't scoff – it could be a laugh, after all. You'll be able to 'do a Torvill' after designing costumes and arranging routines, although whether you'll be able to arrange them around your favourite audio CD tracks remains to be seen.

CHEAP THRILLS

Spend 20 quid on *Guardian II* and you'll get yourself a retro-style arcade game where the aim is to kill as many waves of aliens as possible over 20 levels – bringing the likes of *Scramble* and *Xenon* kicking and screaming into the 3Dfx-accelerated '90s. According to the game's publishers, PBH, Jeff Minter is a fan of the game. We may be, too, when we get our hands on a copy of it next month.

FORSAKEN REMIXED

After receiving rave reviews, the music for last year's *Forsaken* has just been released on CD as a 13-track album, featuring remixes from T-Power and The Orb's Andy Hughes. If you'd like to know more about how to obtain a copy, email info@nobones.co.uk or visit the website at www.nobones.co.uk.

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Hidden & Dangerous combines the WWII strategy of *Commandos* with the tactical first-person action of *Rainbow Six*. It's also a bloody good game, which is why we pleaded with mail order specialists Gameplay to give *PC ZONE* readers a massive £10 discount on the normal high street price, bringing it down to £24.99.

Since we reviewed the game in the last issue, the sound of gunfire has drowned out Macca's latest album and we've taken the game to our hearts in a big way. Almost daily, someone is starting up a multiplayer game somewhere in our subterranean offices, beating into second place – for now, at least – the test version of *Quake III Arena*.

After such ringing praise, you'll no doubt be clamouring for a copy of your very own. Just phone up the nice chaps at Gameplay on 0113 234 0444, give them your credit card details and a copy will be popped in the post – but don't forget to quote PCZ407.

Command a team of four elite commandos against hordes of Germans.

Choose from 40 characters. Preferably not the dead ones.

M1 TANK THREESOME

The next-generation tank sims are rolling into view

Both NovaLogic and MicroProse are working on tank sim sequels, which are sure to engage in a mighty battle to win the hearts and minds of simulation fans. This time, though, there's a third developer hoping to join the fight.

First out of the barracks is NovaLogic's *Armored Fist 3*, a simulation of the M1A2 Abrams battle tank. Like previous versions, *Fist 3* should prove the bigger draw to less dedicated tank enthusiasts, and certainly to fans of NovaLogic's NovaWorld multiplayer service, with 30 players online at any one time and the introduction of Voice-Over-Net technology. Using an enhanced 32-bit VoxelSpace graphics engine, you can direct intelligent infantry units through a mass of missions.

MicroProse's *M1 Tank Platoon 3* will be more hardcore and, apart from looking the best tank sim on offer, it also boasts the most features, notably the option to take direct control of British, German and Russian ground units. For multiplayer fans, the game will be fully compatible with *Gunship III*, MicroProse's chopper sequel, which should be out for Christmas. At the time of writing, NovaLogic couldn't confirm similar plans for their up-and-coming *Comanche 4*.

A more low-key title in development at the moment is *Steel Beasts*, a full-on simulation of the M1A1 and German Leopard 2 tanks. Developers eSim have admitted a lack of resources to include 3D accelerator and multiplayer support. They are currently looking for a publisher, but if no one steps forward to take the game on, it will be distributed from their website, **www.esimgames.com**, which might be worth keeping your sights on.

TANKS FOR THE MEMORY (GROAN)

Yes, we are running out of tank puns

ARMORED FIST 3 (NovaLogic) – Out August

The VoxelSpace engine will enable more realistic scenery, even if it is ugly.

Armored Fist 3 will include infantry for the first time.

M1 TANK PLATOON 3 (MicroProse) – Out Spring 2000

Now you can use trees as cover more effectively.

Yes, you can drive Leopards and Challengers.

STEEL BEASTS (eSim) – Out Winter 1999

The plan is to include 3D acceleration at a later date.

Steel Beasts is a low-key affair that won't be for arcade fans.

ARCATERA

Combining the RPG elements of *Baldur's Gate* with the point-and-click adventure styled by LucasArts is Ubi Soft's *Arcatera: The Dark Brotherhood*. With a party of up to four characters, the aim is to discover who is attempting to overthrow the Prince of the city and – hopefully – eliminate them. However, with ten possible endings, the non-linear structure and the combination of role-playing elements should make for a highly replayable game. There'll be over 200 locations to explore, with hundreds of NPCs that not only interact with your party but also with each other as they go about their daily business, talking, trading or even fighting among themselves.

With a huge range of spoken dialogue, 3D characters and sumptuous pre-rendered 2D backgrounds, *Arcatera* could quite easily put the nail in *Baldur's Gate*'s coffin when it's released early next year.

You can examine NPCs, but you'll have to root deeper to find out what secrets they're hiding.

Arcatera: The Dark Brotherhood is so realistic, you can almost smell the pig shit.

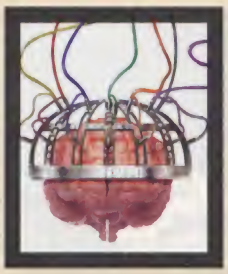
SHORTS

DUKE DRIVEM

The Dukes Of Hazzard are coming to the PC in *Dukes Of Hazzard: Racing For Home* – a mission-based driving game featuring the General Lee, the entire Duke clan, Sheriff Rosco P Coltrane and Boss Hogg. Unfortunately, we haven't got any screenshots (none worth printing, anyway), so here's a picture of Daisy Duke instead.

ALIEN INTELLIGENCE

Word reaches us that Rebellion are hoping to release two expansion packs for *Aliens Vs Predator*, one before Christmas and one next Easter. Due to the success of the game, the developers are pushing to create a sequel. Fox Studios are also hinting that an *Aliens Vs Predator* movie could finally be a reality.



TECHHEAD

Manufacturers fight for a share of the 3D graphics and sound market

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING Carlos Ruiz

THE NEW 3D CARD HEAVYWEIGHTS

Who will emerge as undisputed champion?

TNT2 cards have hit the shelves in 'vanilla' and Ultra variants, and there's no doubt they're the fastest, most proficient all-rounder chipsets since nVidia's original Riva TNT solutions. All the quality features you'd expect are included and the clock rates are terrifying.

The recommended Ultra speed for manufacturers was 150/175MHz (memory/core speeds respectively) but many have jumped the gun. Notably, Hercules (**www.hercules.com**) have produced a 175/200MHz Dynamite TNT2 Ultra, which is overclockable to 200/250MHz using the card's own software.

All these cards come highly recommended – but we would suggest a bit of research to find out which card suits your needs most in terms of speed, price and so on. For example, bear in mind that Creative should be releasing 'Unified' software soon, so that owners of their cards can emulate the Glide API and run 3Dfx-native games with little speed cost. Or you may want to make sure that your TNT2 has a TV output.

Some say that TNT2 Ultra is nothing more than turbo-charged TNT – but that's a good thing, isn't it? Maybe not – many people are already hailing Matrox's Millennium G400 MAX card as the imminent king of graphics, and it certainly looks as if good things may come to those who wait.

Matrox (**www.matrox.com**) have a chipset that is truly future-proof and immensely feature-rich. Combining some outstanding features (such as dual screen support and breathtaking bump mapping) with great 3D performance and unprecedented 2D speed (360MHz RAMDAC, anyone?), this should be the card that takes high-end users into the millennium.

Hercules' Dynamite TNT2 Ultra: swift.

It looks like Voodoo3 is losing ground.

Matrox's G400 Series: the most impressive new arrival.

The 3Dfx (**www.3dfx.com**) Voodoo3 3000 starts to pale in comparison with the TNT2 Ultra models. It may be considerably faster when running 'sub-1000' resolutions but, as resolutions increase, Voodoo3 looks the worse of the pair. Although the 3000 is cheaper than almost any TNT2 Ultra at the moment, the lack of many nice features (such as true 32-bit colour and AGP texturing) means the Voodoo3 is on the backburner already – recommended only for those with low-end PII systems.

Hold out for a proper group test and round-up in a future issue.

SONIC BOOM

3D sound standards face up in duel

You may not be entirely aware of it, but 3D positional sound is poised to become a regular feature in PC games – and it has already taken a stand.

Top developers such as Microsoft, LucasArts and Valve have all shown enthusiasm for the idea, with games such as *Midtown Madness*, *X-Wing Alliance* and *Half-Life* all implementing support. This is a very exciting prospect as proper 3D sound will enable us to become even more immersed in our favourite games.

With 3D positioning, sound comes at you from all angles. While this effect is limited, but still good with two speakers, the real deal comes from a four-speaker kit – combined with a hefty sub-woofer for that ground-shaking bass. Of course, you also need the hardware. 3D positional sound is found only in the latest 'audio accelerators' – that is, all the new high-performance PCI sound cards.

But, as with most things PC-related, it's not that simple. Just as games support 3D acceleration through an API (application programming interface, such as OpenGL or Direct3D), they also support 3D positional audio through one of two main standards.

Creative's SoundBlaster Live! has a fight on its hands.

Environmental Audio (EAX) is Creative's exclusive standard, implemented into all their new PCI-based SoundBlaster sound cards (**www.soundblaster.com**). Aureal own the A3D standard, but sell their A3D/Vortex 2 technology to several big-name manufacturers, such as Diamond and Turtle Beach. There is a healthy selection of A3D cards on the market (see **www.a3d.com**). So we may have another battle of the standards on our hands. Which chipset should you commit to?

Both claim to be superior in terms of performance and quality, and each have pros and cons. There are full lists of supported games on the websites, which might help you decide. Of course, there are other factors to consider – the feature sets (which one suits you best), prices and so on.

You could wait and see what happens, but you shouldn't be disappointed with either solution, especially as many games support both. Maybe a universal standard will eventually take shape, built into a future version of DirectX.

For the latest news and independent views, check out **www.3dsoundsurge.com** to see what you're missing.

FACTCANNON

If you want a simple, stress-free local area network (LAN) in your own home, look no further than the new Anypoint phoneline-based kits from Intel. Each PC in your house connects to a spare phone jack via a PCI or parallel port adapter, so there's hardly any cable mess. You then get a consistent 1Mbps transfer rate between all your linked PCs, which is absolutely fine for LAN gaming, printer sharing and so on. For more info, point your browser at **www.intel.com**.

AMD (**www.amd.com**) are set to introduce their Athlon (K7) range of processors, initially at speeds of 500/550/600MHz. John Carmack (legendary coder of *Doom* and *Quake* fame) has reported that on average, Athlon is faster than the Pentium III equivalent. Could this be Intel's first taste of serious competition?

Get this: with Teac's new 8x-record/24x-read CD-R drives, you can write an entire CD (that's 650Mb or 74 minutes of audio) in just under *ten* minutes! The SCSI-2 interface guarantees reliability when recording at such a high speed, and both the internal and external models come bundled with a PCI SCSI-2 host adapter. Check out **www.teac.com for details**.

SCSI gurus Adaptec (**www.adaptec.com**) have just announced 'USBConnect', an innovative device that will enable you to connect external SCSI hardware directly to your USB ports with minimum fuss and bother. The 1 metre lead will be good for most external devices – such as Iomega Jaz drives, CD writers, scanners and the like, and should cost around £60 to £70.

For CDs that have become unusable through wear and tear, help is at hand in the form of Game Doctor from Digital Innovations (**www.digitalinnovations.com**). It's an outrageous little tool that gently sands away a tiny layer from each disc, thus removing the majority of scratches from the surface. It could be one of the most viable solutions yet for making sure your classics stand the test of time.

Matrox (**www.matrox.com**) have released a comprehensive list of games that will support 'environment mapped bump-mapping' – a cool graphical feature that, for now, is only possible using their G400 video cards. The pick of the bunch includes *Carmageddon 2000*, *Messiah*, *Expendable*, *System Shock 2*, *Black & White* and *Dungeon Keeper II*. More are sure to follow.

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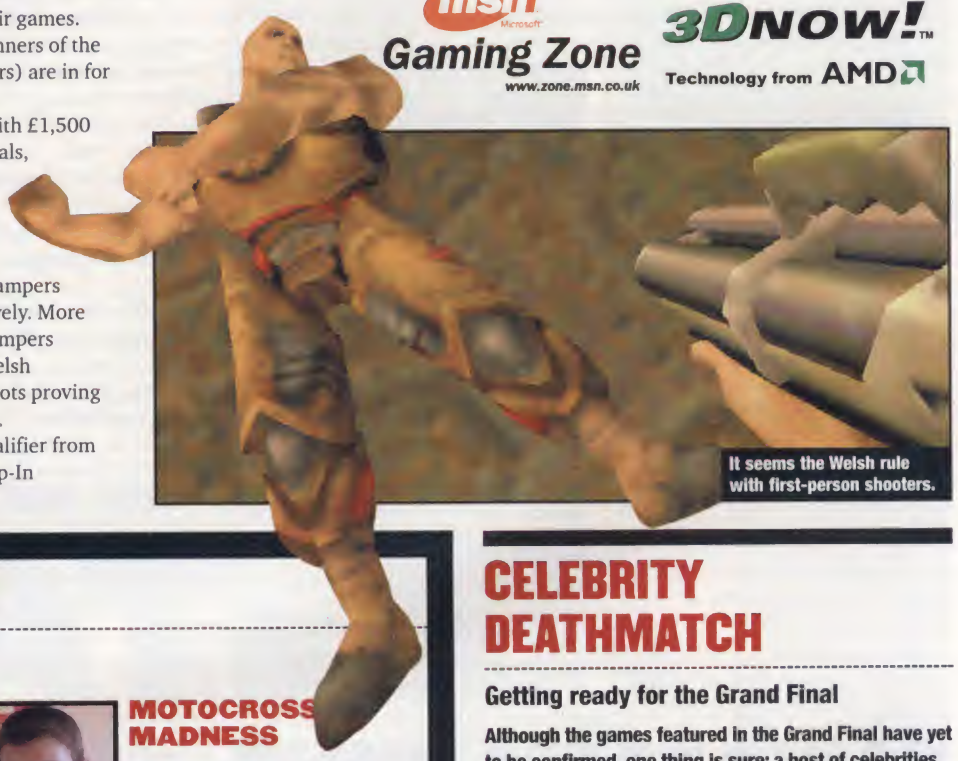
Last month, two teams had made it to the Grand Final. This month we have news of the regional final-winning squads from Wales and Glasgow

Say what you like about our Celtic cousins, they know their games. And after watching the teams at work, Team Unlucky (winners of the London Qualifier) and Dodgy Spider (Birmingham winners) are in for one hell of a tough time come September.

In Cardiff, it was the Blue Booda's who walked away with £1,500 and the chance to prove their mettle in the September Finals, amassing a near-maximum 788 points and coming top in each game except *Total Annihilation*. The two team members, Tasan and Garr, also managed to take five of the eight high scores in the competition so far.

In Scotland the battle was a little closer, with Happy Campers and The Salty Balls taking first and second place respectively. More importantly, three high scores were beaten and Happy Campers racked up an incredible 792 points. So far it seems our Welsh comrades rule with first-person action games, with the Scots proving themselves superior while in charge of a speeding vehicle.

Next month we'll have details of the final Regional Qualifier from Manchester, as well as the latest high scores from the Drop-In Qualifier in London.



It seems the Welsh rule with first-person shooters.

THE HIGH SCORES SO FAR

Four Regional Qualifiers down, one to go...

UNREAL

Name	Tasan
Team	Blue Booda's (Cardiff)
Frags	102

MOTOCROSS MADNESS

Name	Tyco
Team	Happy Campers (Glasgow)
Time	11.39

QUAKE II

Name	Tasan
Team	Blue Booda's (Cardiff)
Frags	120

NEED FOR SPEED III

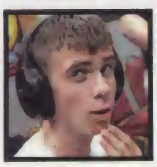
Name	Eck
Team	The Salty Balls (Glasgow)
Time	13.02

AGE OF EMPIRES

Name	Indiana Joe
Team	The Banshees (Glasgow)
Time	7.20

ACTUA SOCCER 3

Name	Garr
Team	Blue Booda's (Cardiff)
Goal difference	63



TOTAL ANNIHILATION

Name	SpeeDemon
Team	As Long As We Beat The English (Cardiff)
Time	13.25

JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL

Name	Darius
Team	Duellist (London)
Score	75

CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

Getting ready for the Grand Final

Although the games featured in the Grand Final have yet to be confirmed, one thing is sure: a host of celebrities will be turning up to show that they're not only a dab hand with a microphone, but with a mouse as well.

Dominic Diamond will be hosting the event, and the *Bits* girls will be floating about, talking to contestants and dabbling in a spot of deathmatching themselves. Terry Pratchett is already racking up the frags for his *Unreal* debut, Jimmy White will be showing off his skills with a virtual cue, and there'll be a host of other celebs. With a bit of luck you'll see them taking on members of the *PC ZONE* team in a special event to be held before the final games kick off.

A Happy Camper tries it on with *Bits* girls Aleks and Emily.

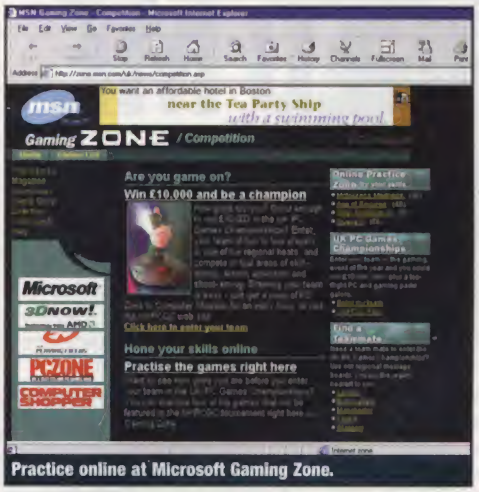
TIME'S RUNNING OUT

There's still time to enter the UK PC Games Championships

If you're reading this issue hot off the press in Manchester, there's still time to enter the Regional Qualifier, which will be held at the Renaissance Manchester Hotel on August 7 and 8. The closing date for entries is July 31, so you'd better get your skates on.

For the rest of you, there's still time to enter the competition by entering the Drop-In Qualifiers. Held from July 5 up until August 29, teams can turn up at London's premier gaming venue, The Playing Fields, to see whether they can better any of the team performances thus far. Call the guys on 0171 383 5850 or visit the Championships website (www.ukpcgc.com) for more details.

Of course, if you're thinking of entering, you'll need some practice. If you check out Microsoft's Gaming Zone (http://zone.msm.com/uk), you can find servers set up especially for online practice, and the ways and means to hook up with potential team-mates if you're having trouble finding gaming partners in your area.



Practice online at Microsoft Gaming Zone.

TECH SPECS

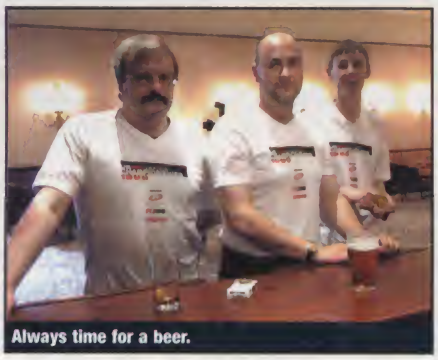
Behind every great machine is a great processor – the K6-III from AMD

After years of being seen as a budget alternative to Intel's processors, AMD have finally proved themselves equal when it comes to high-speed number crunching for today's hard-core gamer. Used in every one of the Championship PCs, the AMD K6-III runs at a blistering 400MHz and incorporates 3D Now! technology. For the Grand Final we may finally see AMD's new K7 chip in action, and after a quick demonstration of its abilities earlier this month, we have to say we're impressed.

If it's high-end 3D acceleration you're after, the Maxi Gamer Xentor 32 packs a mean punch. Based on the TNT2 Ultra chipset, the card complements Philips' Brilliance 17-inch monitor perfectly.

VideoLogic Sonic Vortex 2 sound cards deliver 3D positional sound, so you can hear which direction that railgun is coming from, and all the games fit snugly on Maxtor Diamond Max Plus 20Gb hard drives with plenty of room to spare. Along with Guillemot DVD drives and 128Mb of RAM, the whole lot is encased in a Quantex box to stop all the wires falling out and fag ash falling in. Quite a bundle, and each winning team member will be getting one for picking up the ultimate gaming accolade – the UK's undisputed PC Games Champions.

Totally annihilated in Glasgow.


Always time for a beer.

A need for sheep?

IN THE FINALS

The Welsh and Scottish games champions go through to join the London and Birmingham champions in the Grand Final, one of which will be crowned the UK PC Games Champions

Blimey, the Welsh are small.

If you're happy and you're Camp, clap your hands.

CARDIFF REGIONAL QUALIFIER - OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS (FINAL)

PLACE	TEAM	Quake II	Unreal	Total Annihilation	Age Of Empires	Motocross Madness	Need For Speed	Jimmy White's 2: Cueball	Actua Soccer 3	TOTAL POINTS
1	Blue Booda's	100	100	88	100	100	100	100	100	788
2	Paranomia	98	92	94	92	90	96	98	96	756
3	The Sheep Lovers	92	98	92	98	92	98	94	88	752
4	The Bransonites	96	94	90	88	98	94	96	92	748
5	4 Bytes And A Funeral	88	90	98	94	96	90	92	98	746

GLASGOW REGIONAL QUALIFIER - OVERALL CHAMPIONSHIP POINTS (FINAL)

PLACE	TEAM	Quake II	Unreal	Total Annihilation	Age Of Empires	Motocross Madness	Need For Speed	Jimmy White's 2: Cueball	Actua Soccer 3	TOTAL POINTS
1	Happy Campers	100	100	100	96	100	96	100	100	792
2	The Salty Balls	98	92	98	98	98	100	98	96	778
3	Deep Meat	96	98	88	92	96	98	92	92	752
4	The Banshees	94	94	93	100	94	94	88	90	747
5	The Westenders	88	90	96	87	92	92	94	98	737

TEAMTALK

A quick chat with the part-timers who make games, not for money, but for lurve

Who are you and what are you working on?
I'm Paul Johnstone, and I'm doing a remake of the '80s classic space combat/trading game *Elite* (by Ian Bell and David Braben), called *Elite Legacy* (**www.dalgety-bay.freeserve.co.uk**). Using 3D hardware acceleration, I want to bring the game into the '90s, keeping the gameplay that made the original so great, and bring all the original features from the many different versions of *Elite* together into one shiny Cobra Mk III-shaped package. Basically I'm too impatient to wait for David Braben to release *Elite IV*.

How many people are working on the project? And where are they based?
There's just little ol' me working on *Elite Legacy*. I'm based in Fife, Scotland.

What do you do for a living? How much time do you devote to *Elite Legacy*?
I'm unemployed at the moment, but my last job was games testing. I spend about 16 hours a day coding *Legacy*, which leaves... hang on while I dig out my calculator... eight hours for 'essential activities' such as sleep and the consumption of beer.

When will it be finished?
You should be able to download the single-player version around November; multiplayer and Linux versions will be kicked out the door about two months after that, if all goes well. Currently I'm putting together a – very early – playable demo which should be ready this month – not too bad considering I only started in January.

A Gecko shows off it's new skull motif.

What are your hopes for *Elite Legacy*?
There hasn't been a decent *Elite*-style game since, er... *Elite*, so I just hope *Legacy* will tide people over until *Elite IV* is released. Perhaps I'll even encourage people to dig out their old copies of the game, or even download them from Ian Bell's website (**www.cix.co.uk/~ibell/elite** – Ian Bell has graciously made the original *Elite* public domain) and rediscover the joys of trashing Thargoids in witchspace. At the very least I hope it will help me get a full-time job in the industry.

What would be your ideal job in the games industry?
I'd like to be an AI programmer, or a level designer, or a full-time tester, or a tea boy or... anything, really.

Which game are you most looking forward to, and why?
Elite IV and the final release of *Doom Legacy*, as I'm sure they'll be the finest examples of my two favourite game genres.

David Braben has stated in **alt.fan.elite** that *Elite IV* is doing away with the rather dodgy *Frontier* flight physics and getting back to basics. But you can't tell before it's even past the design stage if it's going to be the brand new official 'best game this side of Lave'.

Doom Legacy (**www.frag.com/doomlegacy**) is one of the best projects on the Net (even if it is being made by Belgians). Its aims are very close to *Elite Legacy*'s: take the original *Doom* and give it a new lick of paint, while keeping the deathmatch experience frantic and panic-inducing. In fact *Doom Legacy* is one of the reasons I started work on *Elite Legacy*. (You can't have failed to notice the similarities in the names.)

Kraits – remember them?

Does *Elite* have a big fan base on the Net?
Elite, *Frontier* and *Frontier: First Encounters*, have loads of fan sites, as well as a busy (if rather surreal) newsgroup called **alt.fan.elite** in which David Braben and Ian Bell have, on occasion, blessed us with their presence. There are also a few other *Elite*-inspired games being made by fans, the most promising being *The Elite Project* (**www.jades.org/tep**), *Galileo* (**www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Lab/6697/index.html**) and *Millennium 3* (**www.anti-matter.clara.net**).

Monolith's LithTech 2.0 engine merges indoor and outdoor locations neatly.

THE SPY WHO FRAGGED ME

From the team that brought you *Shogo: Mobile Armour Division* and *Blood II* comes yet another first-person shooter, this time in the guise of a James Bond spoof called *No One Lives Forever*. With their new LithTech 2.0 engine in place, Monolith hope to create a fast-paced action adventure game with an over-the-top storyline, outrageous villains and groaning 007-style humour.

You take on the role of Adam Church, an undercover agent with MI-Zero, Her Majesty's Most Secret Service. You do fairly mundane things: arrange for the defection of a prominent East German biophysicist, clash with a terrorist group known as HARM, visit a gentlemen's club in London, and encounter a young lady by the name of Ms Sultry Lovechild...

All 33 single and 15 multiplayer levels will have a retro Sixties look, from the inside of a sunken cargo ship, through seedy gambling halls and a doomed airplane ride over the North Sea. There'll be 20 or more unique weapons and gadgets to fiddle with – and no doubt a 'Q' equivalent to administer them – but you'll have to wait until next year to get your hands on them and the rest of the game.

"If you like the look of that, you should see my pants, baby."

All 33 single and 15 multiplayer levels are set in a retro Sixties Europe.

SHOGO A NO-GO?

Unfortunately for *Shogo* fans, two proposed mission packs have been cancelled. *Legacy Of The Fallen* from New Aztech Media has been canned, possibly due to the Canadian company's financial and personnel difficulties. UK mission pack specialists Instant Access have also pulled the plug on their planned add-on, *Shugotenshi*. Monolith are putting all their effort into *No One Lives Forever*, but say they might consider a *Shogo* sequel late next year.

Shogo lives on in the MOD/TC community.

VOYAGER ENGINE UPGRADES

More news and screenshots on Raven's *Star Trek* shooter

The *Quake III Arena* engine is not enough for developer Raven Software, who are looking to far exceed the AI standard set by *Half-Life* for their *Star Trek: Voyager* first-person action game *Elite Force*.

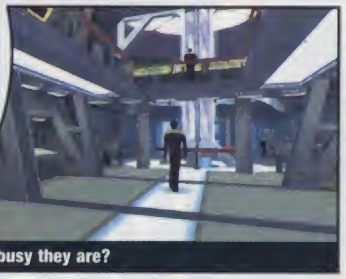
Incorporating a set of new routines called Icarus, the plan is

"The AI-controlled crew will react to different situations depending on how busy they are"

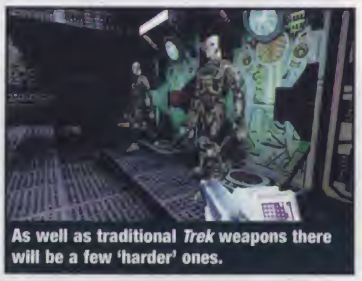
to allow AI-controlled crew members to react to different situations depending on how busy they are, something iD's engine is currently incapable of. If an emergency crops up the crew will go into different modes, running to different stations depending on the nature of the emergency. Medical staff will pull out bandages and security staff their phasers, for instance. Whether a sexual emergency will provoke Seven of Nine to get her kit off remains to be seen.

"Captain Janeway called in sick again?"

"Hey, I've been up Geoffrey's tube."



See how busy they are?



As well as traditional *Trek* weapons there will be a few 'harder' ones.

MISSION TO MARS

Those head crabs get everywhere.

With three characters infected with a virus that mutates when it comes into contact with itself, *Martian Gothic: Unification*, places you in control of a team of specialists who must be kept apart while having to work together to solve the mystery of an alien presence on Mars. The 3D adventure, due to be released by Take 2 in October, is a *Resident Evil* in space-type affair, with non-linear puzzles and a tense atmosphere. The three specialist characters – a microbiologist, a computer wizard and a security expert – should ensure there's a healthy dose of brain-numbing puzzles, tense action and intriguing dialogue. That's the plan, anyway.

"Lawrence from *Changing Rooms* has been in, I see."

PC ZONE EXCLUSIVE!

£5 OFF EVERQUEST – ONLY AT EB electronics boutique

Since its release a few months back, *EverQuest* has established itself as one of the best online games available. With its stunning 3D graphics and unrivalled character interaction, it's the game that's providing a real thorn in *Ultima Online*'s side. And if you don't know what we're talking about, read our head-to-head review of these two great games starting on page 82.

Thankfully, after much deliberation the game is now available over here, exclusively through Electronics Boutique. With this Electronics Boutique coupon you can get £5 off the RRP of £34.99 – that's *EverQuest* for just £29.99. Not only that, *EverQuest* also comes with a 30-day free play trial period – you don't have to subscribe to the software until your trial period expires. And if you want to know more, ask at the counter for more details.

To locate your nearest Electronics Boutique store, call free on 0800 317 778.

This sorceress obviously likes men of all sizes.

EverQuest is also available through Electronics Boutique's mail order service on the same number.

Present this voucher at a store to get your discount.

Terms and conditions *Offer valid only on redemption of this voucher. Offer valid until 26 August 1999. Voucher is redeemable at any Electronics Boutique store in the UK or Eire. Voucher is non-recoverable and not exchangeable for cash. Only one voucher may be used per product and per household. Voucher cannot be used in conjunction with any other voucher or offer.*

NO FUSS RETURNS POLICY

Electronics Boutique have a no-fuss, 10 days return policy where you can return anything you buy from EB within 10 days and get a full refund.

VIRTUAL INSANITY

The messed-up world of ***Ultima Online*** has taken a further twist with the dismissal of an employee for serious misconduct. The sordid story involves **Game Master Darwin**, who abused his position for personal financial gain. As controllers of the online world, the Game Masters can directly manipulate nearly every aspect of gameplay, and Darwin – real name **Kevin Roseler** – used these powers to create a number of objects and sell them in the real world to weak-minded *Ultima* addicts. A check of Roseler's online trading account, **eBay**, showed that there was an auction of more than 19 million gold pieces, three houses, a tower and a pair of castles, netting the virtual renegade a profit in the region of **$8,000**. During this period he also spent some **$6,000** on several top-of-the-line computer systems. In reaction to the incident, **Origin** issued the following press release: "On Thursday, 24 June, Origin Systems was alerted to the possible misconduct of an individual employed within the GM Support Department. Upon investigation, Origin Systems found reason to believe that this employee was engaging in activities that breached the trust that must exist between a company, its employees and its customers. The decision by Origin Systems management in this case was immediate dismissal." Roseler wrote a farewell message to the *UO* community, explaining: "I am no longer employed with Origin Systems, and thus, this ends my time in *UO*, as the company not only blocked the two accounts it gave me, but my personal one as well. I hold no ill will toward Origin Systems, as my leaving was my fault." The tit.

In other virtual madness, the increasingly tedious **Lara Croft** has been appearing on **The Sci-Fi Channel** to highlight its new direction. Apparently, Croft's appearance in a special effects-driven scenario demonstrates her innate "sci-fi-ness", and challenges traditional definitions of who and what represent science fiction. Muck.

A bunch of Dutch loons have based a pretentious contemporary dance piece around the hard-to-avoid ***Tomb Raider*** star. The **Krisztina de Châtel** dance group performed their routine, called simply **Lara**, at Amsterdam's **Across The Harbour Festival**, prancing around on a stage while some kid played *Tomb Raider II* on a big screen. A chef knocked up some 'Lara food', some twats put together a 'Lara mosaic' and VJs flashed some images on a wall. Festival co-producer **Judith Huizing** brayed: "We were fascinated by the story of Lara – that she's world-famous and doesn't even exist... It's because she's introduced as a real person. People can get to know a lot about her: her favourite foods, what kind of music she likes, what her favourite movies are. People can easily think they're Lara." Of course they can't.

Rayman 2 looks like being the best platformer the PC has ever seen.

Our hero has to save his mates from the robot pirates.

In-game cut-scenes will drive the bizarre story forward.

RAYMAN RETURNS

More on Ubi Soft's platform hero

Although it's likely to prove more of a hit on the consoles, *Rayman 2 – The Great Escape* looks like being the only traditional platform game the PC is going to see this year. The hero, far from being a pale imitation of Nintendo's fat plumber, is a weird cross between a duck and a dog, but with no limbs connecting his hands and feet. Bizarre? That's not all...

Robot pirates have imprisoned Ray's chums, and to save them he must find the ingredients to make magical soup. If that doesn't sound weird enough, how about fighting two-footed missiles? And if you haven't guessed already, the game is French. Enough said.

Now in full 3D, Ray can perform all sorts of manoeuvres, using his quiff as a kind of helicopter when the need arises. *Mario*, of course, couldn't even fit in a helicopter.

Rayman 2 – The Great Escape will be released in October.

Ray can jump, fly, swim and even water ski.

OUR MOST WANTED

Until we put a system in place whereby you can vote online for the games you are most looking forward to, we've decided in the meantime to tell you what we think are the ten games you should be looking out for in the run-up to Christmas. This is based on games we've actually seen, rather than on the basis of a few screenshots and a hastily-written press release

1. **Age Of Empires II** (Microsoft) _____ October
2. **Duke Nukem Forever** _____ (GT Interactive) November
3. **Ultima Ascension** __ (EA) October
4. **Quake III Arena** (Activision) October
5. **Driver** (GT Interactive) ___ October
6. **Homeworld** (Sierra) __ September
7. **Indiana Jones & The Infernal Machine** (Activision) ____ October
8. **Half-Life: Opposing Force** (Sierra) _____ October
9. **Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear** (Take 2) _____ September
10. **Freespace 2** (Interplay) _ November

Hundreds of different buildings are available, apparently.

Create a transport infrastructure to get your passengers to their flights on time.

ULTIM@TE AIRPORT

With railroads and amusement parks typically the staple diet of 'god sim' fans, it's refreshing to hear that Kalisto (of *Ultim@te Race Pro* fame) are moving into new territory this Christmas with *Airport Inc.* The idea, for those of you blind to the obvious, is to create and develop a thriving airport, complete with hangars, shops, travelators and mustard-grey carpets. Staff must be hired to serve and protect, and negotiations with airlines and angry residents must be entered into. The first-person mode sounds intriguing, but it's highly unlikely that you'll be able to pick up a gun and shoot anyone brandishing a violin case.

Hopefully, this new direction in god sims will provoke fresh output along the lines of *Theme School*, *Whorehouse Tycoon* and *Software Manager* (that last one was a joke, obviously).

Parking areas, hotels and toilets have to be placed.

200 different airlines will be flying to 1,200 destinations worldwide.

TRIBES GOES OFF-LINE

In a bid to bring *Tribes* to a wider audience, Dynamix are working on *Tribes Extreme* – an enhanced version of the online first-person game that made up half of *Starsiege Universe*. Featuring new training missions and single-player maps, *Tribes Extreme* claims to provide intelligent bots that can be used in off-line games. In a three-part campaign against a new race called the Grievers, you will start off alone and pick up AI-assisted team-mates throughout the 18 missions. For multiplayer fans, *Tribes Extreme* will feature more balanced play and a range of new maps.

Although no release date has been set, expect *Tribes Extreme* to debut before the full-blown sequel, *Tribes 2*, next Spring.

Tribes Extreme aims to take on *Quake III*.

Now single players can join in the fun.

Intelligent bots can be used off-line.

TICKERTAPE

STARTS++ Ubi Soft have picked up *Rage Of Mages 2* from US developers Monolith. The fantasy RTS should be available in September **++STOP++** Sierra's *Babylon 5: Space Combat Simulator* has been renamed *Babylon 5: Into The Fire*. So now you know **++STOP++** Project 2, responsible for *Reah* (read 'Rear' – meaning arse), are doing it again with *Schizm* (which sounds an awful lot like...) **++STOP++** Eidos' *Legacy Of Kain* has apparently slipped until the autumn, due to development problems. Likewise with FPS *Mortyr*, which is having publisher problems **++ENDS**

CONSOLE ZONE

Microsoft team up with Konami while Sega take on Sony and Nintendo alone

SILENT: Richie Shoemaker

It's not often that we get given copies of PlayStation games from publishers, but when one PR bloke turned up with four copies of *Silent Hill*, the office erupted with snorts of derision from all but the lucky quartet.

Thankfully, PC owners are unlikely to miss out on what is sure to be one of the best PlayStation releases of the year. One of the big announcements at E^3 in May was that Microsoft will have first dibs on all Konami games, with a view to porting them to the PC. Which basically means *Metal Gear Solid* and *Silent Hill* are more than likely to turn up in 3D-accelerated form early next year. But, says one US-based Microsoft representative, the problem won't be how or when, but if. Microsoft's squeaky-clean image in terms of wholesome family entertainment could easily be muddied with such titles – one that has you slitting throats, the other shitting loads.

Silent Hill is out now on the PlayStation.

For Konami, the deal heralds a crossover of Microsoft titles to other platforms. Apart from seeing Microsoft's Entertainment packs on the Gameboy Color, there's a fair chance of seeing *Age Of Empires* on the PlayStation.

By then, of course, the PC games world will have moved on. Even the console world will be unrecognisable as Sega's make-or-break Dreamcast will either be fighting for survival or giving Nintendo and Sony a mighty headache. We think the latter. We've had a machine kicking around the office since last December and, although some of the games have been nothing more than attractive rip-offs of PSX games, the potential to take the lead in a market dominated by swish marketing is most certainly there.

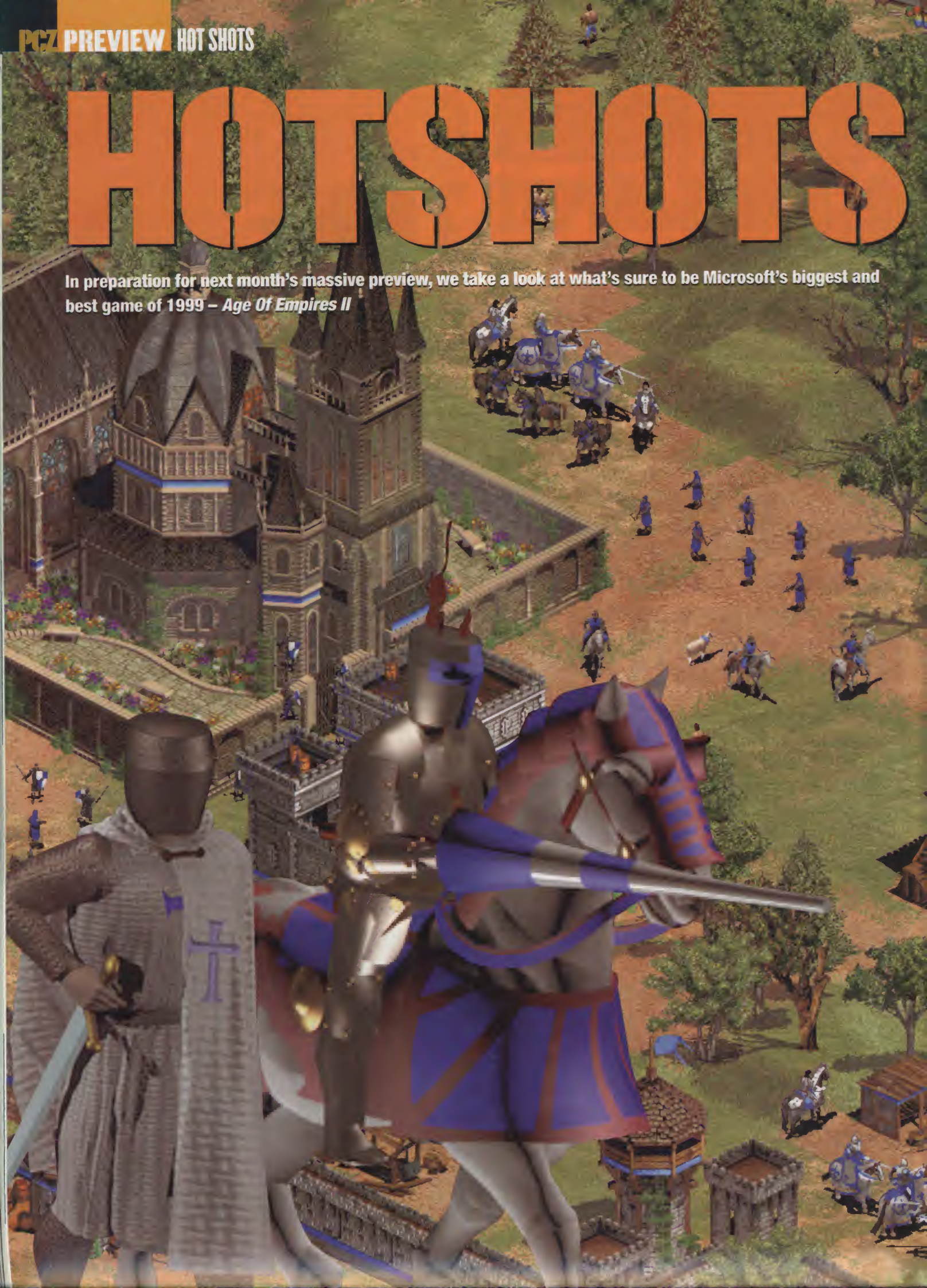
The good news is that at its launch in September, there will be a couple of good games available (which is novel) and, at £199, it won't break the bank. Will it kill off the PC as a gaming platform? Will it hell! That won't stop us buying one, though.

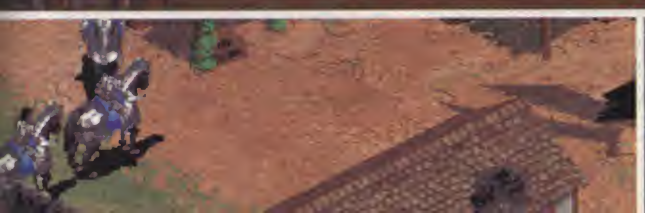
For a PSX game, *Silent Hill* has wonderful lighting effects.

Not as gory as *Resident Evil 2*, but just as tense.

HOTSHOTS

In preparation for next month's massive preview, we take a look at what's sure to be Microsoft's biggest and best game of 1999 – *Age Of Empires II*





AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS

Microsoft • Out November

A true sequel, *Age Of Empires II* follows on from the original real-time strategy classic. You can choose one of 13 civilisations, including Vikings, Mongols, Celts and the Japanese, as they fight through 1000 years of world history, from the fall of the Roman empire to the Dark Ages.

Without a doubt, *Age Of Empires II* is *the* strategy game we here at *ZONE* are looking forward to most. Forget *Tiberian Sun*, delete *Civilization* from your hard drive, because this game is going to take over your life. And ours.

Right now Richie Shoemaker is over in Dallas talking to developers Ensemble, playing the game and getting the lowdown from the legendary Bruce Shelley. We'll have a preview of *The Age Of Kings* in our next issue, on sale Thursday 26 August. For now, we'll let these pictures speak for themselves.

A role-playing legend returns

ULTIMA ASCENSION

Guess who was lucky enough to be shown an almost complete version of the game recently by Richard Garriott himself. Would it help if we told you that *Paul Mallinson* wrote this preview?

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Origin
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts
WEBSITE www.ultimaascension.com
OUT September (TBC)

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's the ninth instalment in the *Ultima* saga
- Unparalleled level of interaction
- Astounding real-world simulation, including proper days and nights
- Certain to become the biggest-selling RPG ever

It's what the world's been waiting for. *Ultima IX* – or, to give the game its proper title, *Ultima Ascension* – is poised to become one of the biggest games of all time, never mind one of the biggest RPGs.

The *Ultima* series, first unleashed on the unwashed masses way back in 1980, is the brainchild of Richard Garriott – a former tabletop role-playing fan who moved into programming when he was introduced to computers.

Since then, Richard, alongside various programming teams, has produced seven best-selling sequels and contributed to a number of ground-breaking side projects, making him one of the most 'minted' men in the entire industry. In fact, the man is so minted (and so inspired by the pageantry and grandeur of his own creations) that he's had a castle built in his own back yard in Texas. At least, that's what the man down the local computer shop tells us.

For such a well-known name, Richard Garriott has been out of the gossip columns for quite some time. Gaming generations have been and gone since the last proper *Ultima* game in 1994 (number eight, *Pagan* – which was a bit of a flop by Richard's standards), and unless you've played *Ultima Online* (Origin's superb online RPG) recently, you've probably never heard of him.

Of course, this will not do. Thankfully, the situation is about to change with the release of *Ultima Ascension* – a title that's sure to put Richard's name back up with the current gaming greats.

ENTERING ITS FINAL TEST

"This version is about 90 per cent complete," says Richard at a recent one-on-one *Ultima Ascension* demo session with *PC ZONE*. We could hardly believe our ears. A game as big as this – due out on time? It can't be true.

"We're just about to go into full test," Richard confirms. But that, it transpires, does not necessarily guarantee the game the post-summer release we've been expecting. In fact, a release date is yet to be set in stone. Richard explains: "Even though we're

The script, written by Kim Krizan, is apparently amazing.

It's gonna be accelerator-only, guys. If you haven't got a card, now's the time to start saving.

FIGURE OF EIGHT

To progress in the world of *Ultima Ascension*, you must lead the Avatar down the paths that follow eight vital virtues – honesty, compassion, justice, sacrifice, valour, honour, spirituality and humility. Basically, you have to turn the Avatar into a real goody two-shoes to complete the game. There will also be eight major cities, each based on one of the eight virtues. Here's a rundown of where you'll be heading...

MOONGLOW The city of mages, and of those who speak the truth.
BRITAIN Home of the bards, who are always singing tales of love and compassion.
VALORIA A city full of fighters, high on adrenalin and valour.
YEW A city in the woods that is just and fair.
MINOC Hard-working craftsmen populate this city based on the virtue sacrifice.
TRINSIC If you're full of honour, and want to be a Paladin, then visit Trinsic.
SCARABRAE Not a Northern seaside town but a city of rangers and philosophers.
MAGINCIA The people in this city are purported to be very proud.

Moonglow – home of honest sorts.

Scarabrae – doesn't have a fair, apparently.

that close, we're still not announcing a release date because we're going to test this game until it's perfect. If we're lucky, it'll be in test for about a month. More realistically, it'll end up being in test for a few months."

The test beta we saw was remarkably complete, even though Richard was using the in-house *Ascension* 'level editor' to move around from scene to scene.

"The world itself is now essentially complete, although there are still plenty of bugs to be ironed out. In fact, you'll probably see it crash once or twice because I'm going to be quite thorough in what I show you," he explained.

While the progress bar on the loading screen chugged away, we asked Richard how long *Ultima Ascension* had been in development. "It's probably been about five years since *Ultima Ascension* was conceived. Admittedly, the *UA* team took a two-year hiatus while everybody went to work on *Ultima Online*, which we thought was gonna be a little six-month task... And when we came back to *UA*, we saw that the technology was two years out of date, so we rewrote the entire engine."

WALL-MOUNTED INSPIRATION

Drawing our attention to the posters on the walls of the demo room, Richard continues to extol the virtues of his latest adventure. "There are a couple of features of this room that are exemplary of where we're headed with this kind of game, and one is my *Ultima VII* poster, which was on the wall of my office," he says, pointing out the poster in question.

"That's there to describe the first big goal of this game – to be the most immersive virtual world ever created. And, in my mind, *Ultima VII* was the best virtual world we'd created. I expect you guys agree."

We do – at the time, it had an unparalleled mix of realism, depth and detail.

"Well, hopefully, today I'll convince you that we've met and exceeded that level of world simulation. The other thing in this room is the *Ultima IV* poster. In my mind, *Ultima IV* was a kind of watershed event in epic storytelling. It wasn't really the best story told within an *Ultima*, but it was clearly a big event towards storytelling in the series, and this is also what we're trying to do with this game. This is the end of a trilogy of trilogies. It's got to be the biggest, most bad-assed game ever, from a story standpoint. And that's why I moved these two posters from my office, so that I can show you guys what we're shooting for with this game."

> **"This is the end of a trilogy of trilogies. It's got to be the biggest, most bad-assed game ever"**
>
> ***ULTIMA ASCENSION* CREATOR RICHARD GARRIOTT**

STARTING OUT

"In most games," says Richard, "in most role-playing games – and especially most *Ultima* games – you go through a process where you get the CD, you install it, and it takes a bit of time. Then you go to a main menu, then an options menu, where you set up the screen resolution or whatever. Then you usually go through a character creation process, which is generally in some other mode of interaction... In some role-playing games, it can take over an hour before you're playing properly, and then – *oh, wow* – you're suddenly overwhelmed by all the things you can do."

But what are the alternatives?

"We've taken a cue from some of my favourite games over the years, such as *Command & Conquer*, *WarCraft*, *Heroes Of Might & Magic II*, and we've been playing a bit of *Lands Of Lore III* recently. One of the particularly important aspects of those games is that you start off with a fairly simple set of rules to understand and learn, and it only becomes complex over time. Unlike past *Ultimas*, or *Lands Of Lore III*, you don't start with any of your physical interface – you actually discover it as you go and are rewarded for finding and learning new things. Which is a much more powerful way to introduce the player to the arena than the *Ultima* version, which is: 'Ta da! Good luck – go for it!' As opposed to having an install, then main menus, then character creation, then getting dropped into the virtual world, with *UA* you install the game, watch a brief movie, then go directly into the gameplay. There are no main menus. In fact, there's no main menu even when you're in the game – everything's done in the game engine. So all you'll see is game and movies.

Q&A

RICHARD GARRIOTT

We ask the elusive Ultima *creator a few pertinent questions*

PCZ What's the first game you ever played?

RICHARD As far as video games are concerned it has to be *Pong* – you know, the thing with the little paddles, and all you could do was go up and down. The first computer game I played was a text-only adventure that was operating on a mainframe near where I grew up.

PCZ What's your favourite game of all time?

RICHARD *Sundog*, which was basically *Ultima* meets *Wing Commander*. You ran around the surface of the land, like in *Ultima*, but you could also jump into a transport device and dock with a spaceship. You could then fly around and shoot things. It was an excellent game – for the Apple II.

PCZ What was the last game you paid good money for?

RICHARD Either *Command & Conquer* or *WarCraft*. Or *Heroes Of Might & Magic II*. In fact, I bought all of them. I haven't bought a game since.

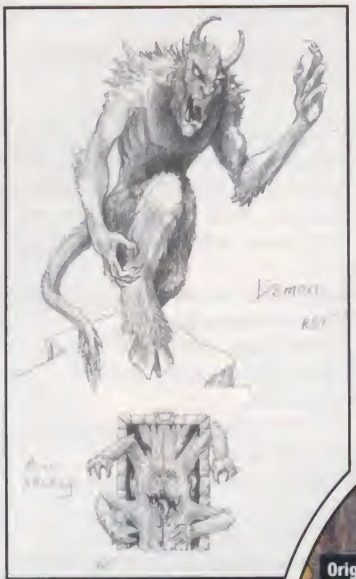
PCZ What games are you playing at the moment?

RICHARD None – apart from *Ultima Ascension*. I go through a year or two of playing nothing, then find some game that I really, really like, then play it way too much. The games I mentioned above were the last few I played to death.

PCZ Have you ever been in a fight? If so, what happened?

RICHARD A fist fight? Erm, well – yeah – one time in high school when I was out in California. I was in a sand box area, with swings. There was this kid about my age who was pushing little kids off these swings. The parents were there, and they were pissed off, but none of them would do anything. Finally I got so angry that nobody would stand up to this bully that I just walked over there and met him with a fist full-on. I knocked him off the swing he was sitting on, and chased him outta the area. All the parents came up to me afterwards and said: "Thank you very much." That was the only time I've ever been in a fight.

"I go through a year or two of playing nothing, then find some game that I really, really like, then play it way too much. The last few games I played to death included *Command & Conquer* and *WarCraft*"



Sketches for *Ultima Ascension* characters.

"Some little bugger's moved the signposts around!"

Origin have gone for a colourful, stylised look that seems to suit the game extremely well.

Then it's a case of discovering the interface as you go along."

BAKING BREAD

As you may already know from past *Ultimas*, you're a person from Earth who finds his way to a magical land called Britannia, and it is here that you come face to face with the bad guys – or, in *Ultima Ascension*'s case, the Guardian and his evil minions (as seen in the past two *Ultimas*). The difference with *Ultima Ascension* is that instead of starting off in Britannia, you begin on Earth.

After a particularly impressive intro sequence, Richard continues his demonstration: "We're inside the Avatar's house now. He's woken up after having this bad dream. You can hear the narrator giving us basic information about how to work the game, and I'm just kinda skipping through it so I can narrate myself. You can move the mouse to look up and down, and left and right, click the right mouse button to 'move' and the left one to 'use'. This entire first area of the game is there for you to pick things up, walk around and explore. There are lots of cool things to do."

Richard obviously takes great pleasure in demonstrating the level of interactivity in his game – he hits a key on a harpsichord and it chimes. He shows that light switches can be turned on and off, that the TV works (currently showing various channels advertising existing Origin games), that the clocks are accurate and that the toilets flush.

"Do you guys know about the issue of 'baking bread'?" he asks. There's a show of blank faces. We have no idea. "There was an issue where people were really concerned about whether you'd be able to bake bread or not in this game. A previous Origin producer and I were having a conversation online one time and we were asked: 'How deep is the real-world simulation? Will I be able to grind wheat to make flour, then mix it with water, then use it to bake bread?' The producer said that *Ultimas* weren't about baking bread, they were about other adventuring aspects. And everybody just slammed him, saying: 'This guy does not get *Ultimas*,' and 'He's got the wrong angle.' So, thinking that *Ascension* is a deeply simulated *Ultima*, we decided to add the 'Mister Bread Maker' TM, which you can activate and use to make bread. Of course, there are other ways of baking bread in the game... and we definitely wouldn't want to leave them out."

Richard continues: "Your first task, the narrator tells you, is to go and collect a number of essential items, starting with your clothes. Of course, the Avatar hasn't done any laundry for a while and there are no clean clothes in the house. As you can see, there are some dirty clothes lying around. Pick up your dirty shirt and pants, and clean them." He washes them in a virtual washing machine.

"Everything works," Richard smiles, proudly, filling a nearby wash basin with water.

"Then you have to find the first piece of your interface. And here it is – a utility belt. When you pick it up, a shortcut bar appears. This gives you quick access to a handful of inventory items."

With a quick change of direction, Richard leads the Avatar into the study. Here, he shows us even more detail – the computer works, and the foot locker opens, revealing more items. He even tests the battery on the overhead smoke alarm. Then he comes across a backpack which, once acquired, fills the screen with a swirl of motion and adds even more to the interface. Finally, there's a small compass resting on a nearby mantelpiece, which fills another gap in the Avatar's travel kit.

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO CAN HURT YOU

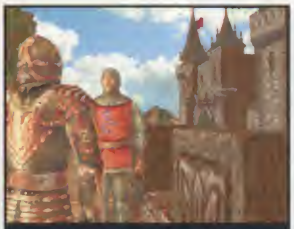
Richard then takes his 'bare bones' Avatar outside – to continue his adventure in the woods beside the house. Although *Ultima Ascension* falls short of the graphical splendour of a game such as *Blade*, its colourful, stylish graphics are beautifully realised and the simulated flora and fauna seem remarkably lifelike.

"This is modelled on a park near us in Austin, Texas," says Richard, before turning our attention back to the Avatar.

"We know that the act of jumping is highly political and must be carefully done. If you played *Ultima VIII*, you'll know that jumping was a real problem. In this case, you'll notice the little aiming recticle on screen. When it's green, it shows the distance I can jump with 100 per cent reliability. Yellow indicates my shootable, throwable range. And red is further away from that – you might be able to hit something, but not necessarily reliably."

Seems simple enough. What about combat? "When you start off, you have only one simple attack." Richard moves his character over to a sparring ring and demonstrates various weapons techniques. "As the game

Here's a shot of the backpack inventory. You can pick it up and place it wherever you want.



Ultima Ascension currently has over 175 non-player characters to converse with.

Did Arthur C Clarke contribute to the story?

Orc alert! Orc alert!

THE HISTORY OF ULTIMA

There have been a few *Ultima* games released over the years. Here's a bluffer's guide to the lot of them

Akalabeth (1979) The prequel to the *Ultima* series, written for Apple computers.

Ultima: The First Age Of Darkness (1980) Part one in the saga of *The Age Of Darkness*.

Ultima II: Revenge Of The Enchantress (1982) The second episode had a much bigger game world.

Exodus: Ultima III (1983) The RPG that changed the way we played RPGs.

Ultima IV: Quest Of The Avatar (1985) Part one in the saga of *The Age Of Enlightenment*.

Ultima V: Warriors Of Destiny (1988) A great adventure, but not as good as *Ultima IV*.

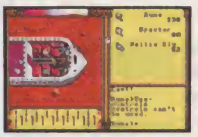
Ultima VI: The False Prophet (1990) A disappointing end to the second saga.

Ultima VII (1992) Considered the best *Ultima* of all time. This game, in fact, consisted of two separate titles – *The Black Gate* (1992) and *The Serpent Isle* (1993).

Richard practises his dandy highwayman look.

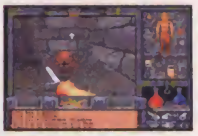
Ultima VIII: Pagan (1994) A sprawling adventure marred by an over-ambitious game engine.

Worlds Of Ultima: The Savage Empire (1991) A spin-off featuring the Avatar and his friends, plus some dinosaurs thrown in for good measure.

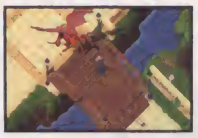


Worlds of Ultima: Martian Dreams (1992) An HG Wells-inspired spin-off this time, again featuring the Avatar, but in a different setting.

Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss (1992) Ground-breaking first-person 3D adventure based on Richard Garriott's world.



Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth Of Worlds (1993) The arguably superior sequel was way ahead of its time. An all-time classic.



Ultima Online (1998) Currently the biggest and most successful online RPG ever.

progresses you'll learn other moves. Each weapon has its own set of attacks and different skills to get to grips with. Either way, once you've learned all the basics, you go off and find the Gypsy."

As *Ultima* fans may already know, the Gypsy is responsible for the Avatar's persona on Britannia itself. She poses 'ethical parables' (soul-searching questions) and deals Tarot cards to help create the Avatar you want. She features in *Ultima Ascension* but, as Richard explained, her role will be handled in-game using the 3D engine. Once that's all done, it's off to find a nearby circle of stones and – bam! – you're in.

"Then you get the last two pieces of your interface – the journal, where you can save and load games, and record things that will help you later on, and finally your spell book," adds Richard, before wrapping up the demo. "We wait for you to get to Britannia before teaching you magic because, of course, magic doesn't work back on Earth."

AN EPIC TALE

The story of *Ultima Ascension* will pick up where *Ultima VIII: Pagan* left off. The Avatar discovers Britannia in a ravaged state, torn asunder by The Guardian. Inexplicably, eight huge columns have sprung from the ground and are slowly ripping their way through the land, agitating the seas, disorientating the moons and emitting eight anti-virtues that inspire dark sentiments in the people of Britannia. The Avatar's quest will lead him down a virtuous path based on three main principles – truth, love and courage (as has been the case in pretty much every previous *Ultima* game), each of which will play a key role in defeating his enemies.

It sounds like *Ultima Ascension* will be one hell of an adventure game when it's finally finished. It'll span four CDs, require a 3D card to run, and will no doubt introduce a whole new generation of gamers to the way of the *Ultima*.

Believe us when we say that's no bad thing. PCZ

Break out the steel pins, it's...

GP500

Real men do it on two wheels. *Paul Presley* does it with a joystick in his hand

As though being on two wheels wasn't difficult enough.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Infogrames Melbourne
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive
WEBSITE www.gp500.com
OUT Autumn

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Holds the official FIM licence
- Realistic bike handling tested by professional racers
- All the tracks, teams, drivers and – most importantly – advertising sponsors of the 1998 season
- Motorbikes make you sexually attractive to women

I was having this argument down the pub the other day with a couple of mates about which of today's many and varied sporting activities requires the most bottle.

After going through the more obvious candidates (bullfighting, women's football, being English in Glasgow), we found ourselves debating whether Indycar or motorcycle racing took the most guts. The argument for the former ran that despite the circular tracks, the presence of a thick, unyielding concrete wall around the outside edge meant that death was merely a tiny shunt away.

Poppycock, came the response. Indycars are so solidly built and the cockpit is so rigidly designed that there's very little danger to the driver at all.

Now with motorbikes, one nudge and you're propelled 50 feet into the air with only gravity for company. You have no control over your descent to the Tarmac or the trajectory of the somersaulting two-wheeler bearing down on your hapless frame. You're at God's mercy and you'd better pray he's not feeling vengeful.

Anyhow, this is all a convoluted way of introducing a brand new team to the world of motorised bicycle racing simulators and making the point of how realistic *GP500* is aiming to be.

What Geoff Crammond did for Formula One (ie bog you down in so much realism that you had to be David Coulthard to win a race), Infogrames Melbourne are hoping to do for bikes. And what *Kingpin* did for mutilating human bodies using lead pipes, *GP500* is doing for dismembering racers who fly off their seats.

ANIMATED LIMBS

The first step is to make sure it all looks and sounds as authentic as possible, so publishers Hasbro have been quick to snap up the official FIM licence, meaning you'll get all the teams and tracks from the just-completed 1998 season recreated in nauseatingly good detail. Less than a year ago, the kind of graphical detail seen in *GP500* wouldn't have been out of place in an intro sequence. Admittedly, the majority of the screenshots on these pages were taken at 1024x768 using a TNT-based accelerator card, but if that wasn't an argument to upgrade your hardware *tout suite* then I'm sorry, but you might as well go and play with an Amiga, because you're never going to be convinced.

But the details! Ah, the details. The bikes have every kind of graphical enhancement you can think of, right down to shiny exhaust pipes and windshields that reflect your instruments. The riders themselves are also fully animated, their bodies bending as they take corners, their heads moving from side to side as they track other competitors and their limbs flailing as they hurtle through the air with the grace of a tap-dancing elephant.

SILVER DREAM MACHINE

But gorgeous graphics aren't much of a rallying cry in these technologically aware times (yeah, right). Luckily, *GP500* packs a hefty wallop under the hood (or wherever it is these things keep their engines) by creating what the developers are claiming is the most realistic engine modelling ever seen for a game of this type. Enlisting the likes of Kenny Roberts Jr, a professional US GP500 racer (be impressed), to oversee the authenticity of it all, the game certainly feels realistic enough. A lot of motorbike games tend to miss that 'weighty' feeling that massive engines give you, but *GP500* appears to have got it bang-on. You can spend as much time tinkering about in the garage, changing suspension settings, engine configurations and so on, as you can on the actual track, crashing into tyre barriers.

"What *Kingpin* did for mutilating human bodies using lead pipes, *GP500* is doing for dismembering racers"

As you race around each course, you have to be aware of downshifts, leaning tactics, tyre temperatures, smoke and dust debris emanating from the bikes in front, weather conditions – practically everything a real-life rider has to worry about

"Psst – I think we're being followed."

One of the few sports where leaning is an art form.

(with the exception of which of the pit lane girls to go home with after the race). Of course, those of you without a civil engineering degree can switch most of these options to automatic if all you want to do is ride.

SKID MARKS

And what of the riding? There are several options open to you, from the usual arcade versus simulation modes (determining how many times you end up with a camshaft sticking through your spleen when you first start) to individual levels of opponent AI. The aim is apparently to give them all different 'racing styles', modelled on their real-life counterparts, but they can all be adjusted by 10 per cent increments to bring them more into line with your own personal racing style of hanging on to the handlebars for dear life and praying there aren't any corners coming up.

Likewise, the length of each race can be taken right down to a bare handful of laps (more than enough to puncture a kidney or two) or shoved right up to a full-on, 60-plus lap race, ending in triumph or heartache (or, more likely, a heart bypass as the doctors struggle to restore what's left of your internal organs). Other options include full practice and qualifying sessions, 16-player network and Internet options, and even the ability to transfer 'ghost' riders – representing your best lap times – with other players.

EA's recent *Superbike World Championship* (*PCZ* #75, 82%) almost captured our attention a few months ago, but was ultimately let down by poor AI in the other riders, consequently breaking the realistic feel it might otherwise have had.

Since there aren't very many other motorbike racing sims on the way right now, providing *GP500* delivers on its promises, it should be the defining word in a largely overlooked genre. PCZ

Perhaps it was unwise to call all bikers a bunch of poofs.

Quick, sneak through that gap in the middle.

CV

BEAM SOFTWARE

Australia's leading game developers have been around for yonks, sport

1982 Beam (through publishers Melbourne House) bring the world games such as *The Hobbit*, *Penetrator* and the legendary *Horace* series.

1985 *Way Of The Exploding Fist* signals the start of the ninjas-kicking-each-other-in-the-face 'em ups.

1991 *Super Smash TV* on the SNES.

1993 *MechWarrior* heralds an era of big-robot games that continues to this day.

Q&A

BEAM SOFTWARE

Jimmy Tutton and Russell Comte are Producer and Art Director respectively at Beam Software

PCZ What's the first game you ever played?
RUSSELL *Pong!*
JIMMY *Pong!*
PCZ What's your favourite game of all time?
RUSSELL *World Circuit* on the Amiga.
JIMMY That Barbie thing.
PCZ What was the last game you paid money for?
RUSSELL *Grand Prix Legends.*
JIMMY *Half-Life.*
PCZ Which games are you playing at the moment?
RUSSELL *GP500* and *Grand Prix Legends.*
JIMMY *GP500.*
PCZ Have you ever been in a fight?
RUSSELL Sure, I was in one with Jimmy just the other day because he was bugging me about 'wacky' interviews.
JIMMY Yep, I'm always fighting with Russell about doing interviews with the press now that we're famous – not.

An ominous dust storm signals impending disaster.

Rising from the ashes, it's...

PHOENIX

A Team 17 production without Worms? Ever sceptical, *Craig Vaughan* investigates

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Team 17
PUBLISHER Hasbro Interactive
WEBSITE www.team17.com
OUT September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It looks beautiful, even unaccelerated
- It shakes off the restricted and linear nature of similar games
- There's loads of variety in the missions
- The FMV adds to the atmosphere, rather than detracting from it

The *Worm*-obsessed folk at Team 17 clearly think they've found a gap in the games market, and trawling through the *PC ZONE* archives leads us to believe that they might just be right. It's something of an enduring irony that one of the earliest space combat trading games, *Elite*, remains one of the best (although these days it appears heavily dated). Over the years, our favoured format has been blessed with a run of good space-based games, the most recent being *X-Wing Alliance* (*PCZ* #77, 88%) and *Hardwar* (*PCZ* #67, 85%) – both of them great games, but neither of them a classic. No, for the perfect blend of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and full-motion video, you have to go back three years to the pre-3Dfx *Privateer 2: The Darkening* (*PCZ* #44, 94%).

THE WORM HAS TURNED

Historically, Team 17's games have been renowned for their playability rather than their graphical flair, so *Phoenix* is something of a departure. But looking at the impressive screenshots, it's reassuring to see that they haven't been overwhelmed, because the game sports a truly beautiful accelerated engine. It's worth mentioning though, that tons of time and effort has been invested in providing a supremely credible software-only version for those without ninja hardware.

The plot is intriguing too, and – initially at least – puts you on the right side of the law as a low-paid futuristic cop living a mundane existence. Your world is very quickly turned upside down by the sudden death of your partner and the conspiratorial behaviour of your colleagues. The mystery unravels, and soon takes on earth-shattering proportions as the atmosphere darkens and you become increasingly isolated. To say more would ruin the multi-layered plot which unravels not only through the full-motion video (which, thankfully, has been tightly scripted and has no big Hollywood stars preening for air time), but also through engine-driven cut-scenes and sparkling audio narrative (which is as unique as it is involving).

FOLLOWING THE PLOT

Although there are more than 60 missions, Team 17 are keen to avoid the repetitive 'shoot that, collect this and take it there' nature of similar offerings, and it could be that their clever solution to avoiding that problem adds to the longevity of this title. You all start at the same point in the game, but your early performance dictates the route you take through the remainder of it. Prove yourself to be cack-handed at piloting, and you're posted to a space station as a penance; pilot competently and you continue your police service and have the opportunity to hone your skills; shine and you're drafted into the elite military core, piloting all manner of craft and getting straight to the heart of the action. Obviously all these plot strands merge later in the game, but the initial diversity ensures a smooth difficulty curve whatever your area of competency. Indeed, assisting novices seems to be a key aim of the project.

Anyone put off by the necessity for multiple keypresses and the joystick gymnastics usually associated with games of this genre can rest easy, because Team 17 are helpfully including a completely customisable head-up display, which means that although there are numerous cargo and transport ships to control (from small and manoeuverable fighters, to massive, lumbering freighters, each with their own unique physics and armaments), you're always familiar with your immediate environment because you've designed it.

> **"*Phoenix* looks set to achieve that elusive goal of combining a compelling and believable universe with a tense and demanding plot"**

Notice all the weapons on the head-up display.

CV TEAM 17

TEAM 17

Team 17's pedigree goes all the way back to the heyday of 16-bit computing. Here are the highlights of a decade at the top

1991 *Full Contact* (Amiga)
Alien Breed (Amiga)

1993 *Superfrog* (Amiga)
F-17 Challenge (Amiga)
Body Blows (PC 286+)
Qwak (Amiga)
Overdrive (Amiga)
Alien Breed (PC 286+)

1995 *Arcade Pool* (PC)
Superfrog (PC)
Project X (PC)
Ultimate Body Blows (PC)
Tower Assault (PC)
Worms (PC)

1996 *Worms* (multi-format)

1997 *Worms United* (PC)
X2 (PSX)
Worms 2 (PC)

1998 *Addiction Pinball* (PC)

1999 *Worms Armageddon* (PC)

A CAN OF WORMS

A history of *Worms*-related gaming

It's been a bit of a while since I had a dose of *Worms*.

Although the company has a long and varied list of hits across a variety of formats, it's the *Worms* series that's kept them smiling

1995 ***Worms*** **(Amiga, CD32, PC and PlayStation),** ***PCZ*** **#33, 84%**
1996 ***Worms*** **(Saturn, Gameboy, Snes, Megadrive, Apple Mac)**
1996 ***Worms Reinforcements*** **(PC)**
1997 ***Worms United*** **(PC)**
1997 ***Worms Directors Cut*** **(Amiga)**
1997 ***Worms 2*** **(PC)** ***PCZ*** **#58, 82%**
1999 ***Worms Armageddon*** **(PC)** ***PCZ*** **#74, 90%**
2000 ***Mutant Worms From Mars*****, probably**

PROMOTING SURVIVAL

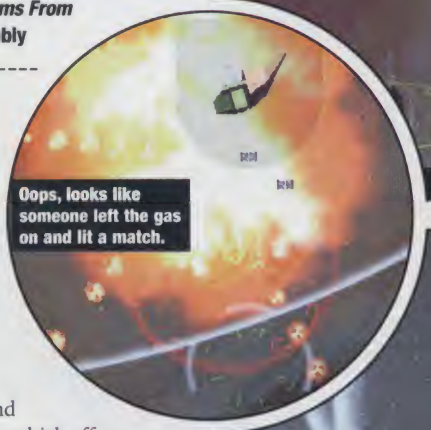
Speaking of weapons – a 'work in progress' – they've already been split into two distinct groups: energy weapons, which deplete shields, and projectile weapons which affect structural integrity and cause the fireworks – hit the fuel tanks of an enemy ship and you don't have to wait until the fifth of November to see a devastating display of pyrotechnics.

The reward for bravery is progression through the ranks, but promotion isn't just about bossing people about, it enables you to choose which specific role you play in each mission undertaken by your squadron. Obviously, if there's a suicide mission on offer you'd be daft to lead from the front (why be a 'bullet sponge'?), but if the mission intelligence is good and the briefing indicates that you're heading for a soft target, then someone has to take the credit. (It's rather like being several different characters in a soap opera, and adds tremendously to the replay value, as well as giving you empathy for the job that other characters are doing.)

Setting off, alone and virtually defenceless, into the unknown.

A squadron maintains its formation as it moves in for the kill.

The universe is expansive, so stock up on navigational tools.


Oops, looks like someone left the gas on and lit a match.

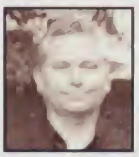
Avoid the enemy disrupters to preserve your shields.

Just weeks from completion, *Phoenix* looks set to achieve that elusive goal of combining a compelling and believable universe with a tense and demanding plot that engages the cranium as much as the trigger finger.

You can be confident about the release date, too – a couple of the programmers have plans to marry in September (not to each other, we understand), and they've been told they're going nowhere until this project is put to bed. Judging by what we've seen so far, it could be that their nuptials won't be the only cause for celebration at that time. PCZ

Q&A

WILD AND WACKY


Nick Wild, the game's producer, recently took time out to discuss the project

PCZ How many different alien races are there in the game?
NICK There are five – but you'll have to play the game to find out who or what they are!
PCZ How long would it take to complete the game?
NICK It depends on the skill of the player, but there's at least 30 hours of gameplay.
PCZ Will the game be 'simulation'-oriented, like *X-Wing Alliance*, or more immediate, like *Colony Wars*?
NICK More immediate.
PCZ Will there be any cheat modes or new craft made available after completing sections of the game?
NICK Bigger and better ships will be made available to you as you progress through the game. There will be cheat modes, but they haven't been defined as yet.
PCZ Does the game feature realistic physics?
NICK It features Newtonian Physics, with a hint of artistic licence.
PCZ Will there be a multiplayer LAN or Internet option, and if so what form will it take?
NICK At least ten styles of multiplay – free-for-all, team play, and even a football game with asteroids!
PCZ How many players will be able to connect during LAN/Internet games?
NICK Internet eight players, LAN nine players.
PCZ Describe a typical *Phoenix* gaming experience.
NICK Fighting for your life in one or more futuristic spaceships against hordes of alien oppressors.
PCZ How much FMV is there in the game?
NICK Twenty-two minutes – eleven sequences.
PCZ What style have you taken with the FMV?
NICK A light film noir.

RISING FROM THE ASHES

Meet the guys bringing you *Phoenix*
Left to right: John Eddgert, Mark Baldwin, John Dennis, Bjorn Lynne, Neil South, Charles Blessing, Mike Green, Russell Smith, Andy Clitheroe, Nick Wild, Rory Little, Mark Taylor, Andy Morris.

Havas Interactive UK Limited, 2 Beaumont Plaza, Gillette Way, Reading, RG2 0BS TEL: 0118 920 9100, FAX: 0118 987 5600 www.sierrastudios.com/games/homeworld/

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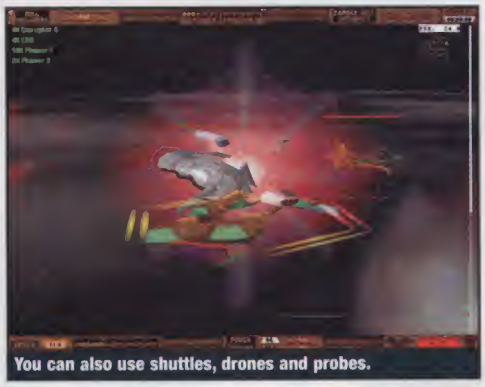
Be careful with those asteroids...

Why do mighty Klingon warbirds look so prissy?

She be a fine ship, cap'n.

That planet looks familiar. Let's invade it.

All information on your ship is just a click away.


You can also use shuttles, drones and probes.

Just like that scene in *Scanners*, but without the head.

STARFLEET COMMAND

Resistance is futile – *Mark Hill* is going to tell you all about the next *Star Trek* game whether you like it or not

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Quicksilver
PUBLISHER Interplay
WEBSITE www.interplay.com
OUT September

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's a *Star Trek* RTS in space
- It's set around the original series
- Use points to climb up the ranks
- Play as five different races

You'd be forgiven for being confused by the barrage of *Star Trek* titles coming out this year. For those of you who can't tell their Klingon from their elbow, *Starfleet Command* is a real-time strategy game in space where you control your very own starship and develop a career in your fleet. Set in the time of the original series, you have the choice of playing as one of five races (Federation, Klingons, Romulans, Lyrans and Hydrans), each of which plays a part in the game's storyline. To witness the final unraveling of the plot, you need to complete the game as all of them.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

The story concerns an all-powerful race called the Organians who, after imposing a peace treaty between the Federation and the Klingons (as seen in the Errand Of Mercy episode), disappear under unknown circumstances. Doors to other universes open up as spatial anomalies ripple through the galaxy, letting in space monsters and causing all sorts of trouble. The core of the game, however, involves fighting it out for supremacy against the other races. You can play a whole campaign or a quick skirmish, depending on how you feel. The campaign is based on the Dynaverse system, which generates different missions depending on your actions and the general state of the universe. This should ensure that no two games are alike, adding even more diversity to the gameplay.

Although *Starfleet Command* is all in real time, it's based on a popular American board game. And if you're wondering who the hell the Lyrans and the Hydrans are, it's because so far they've only existed in that format. You have access to a further two races in multiplayer mode: the Orions and the Gorn, both of which should be familiar to Trekkies.

One of the main disappointments of *Birth Of The Federation* were the battle sequences, which not only looked rather dull, but you also had very little control over them. The battles are the crux of the *Starfleet Command*, so it's no surprise that they look gorgeous and offer tons of depth. The first thing you need to take into consideration is how different 'terrains', such as nebulae, black holes and asteroid fields, affect manoeuvrability, communications and so on. You must also remember that your ship is a complex vessel, not just a flying space gun. There are four ships to choose from – frigate, light cruiser, heavy cruiser and dreadnought – each with their own specifications and characteristics. Weapons include phasers, plasma torpedoes and the Expanding Sphere Generator (which creates a sphere of energy around your ship, protecting it from attacks, and causing damage to any ships you come into contact with). You can also use tractor beams, and even beam marines over to enemy ships on hit-and-run missions or to attempt to take them over.

"The battles are the crux of *Starfleet Command*, so it's no surprise that they look gorgeous and offer tons of depth"

If you're still not convinced, play the exclusive demo on this month's cover disc and be converted. PCZ

Welcome to the Killing Grounds

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2

Your mercenaries will climb, swim, jump and crawl their way through deadly firefights.

Fight to free an entire nation – sector by sector, town by town.

Interact with dozens of characters. Treat them well, and they'll support your cause. Treat them badly, and they'll stab you in the back.

A ruthless dictator has taken control of the tiny nation of Arulco. The country's brutal army has a terrified population in its iron grip, its only opposition a ragtag bunch of rebels. The bad news: you're in charge of the rebels. The good news: some of the world's best mercenaries will fight on your side... if you can afford them. Ahead lies a savage struggle for freedom. To win, you'll need the negotiating skills of a diplomat, the strategic genius of a general, the battle tactics of a commando...

PC GD

www.talonsoft.com - www.take2games.com

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SIRTECH

TAKE 2

TALONSOFT

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"Nipples like bullets... I've only been on the hormones 18 months..."

Remember kids, drugs screw you up.

Any similarity to Lara Croft is purely coincidental.

It's like a jungle sometimes...

Tomb Raider on acid? Possibly.

Heavy Metal: should be popular in Wales.

HEAVY METAL: FAKK2

For those about to rock... *Steve Hill* squeezes into the spandex trews and slaps on some dodgy eyeshadow

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER Gathering Of Developers
WEBSITE www.godgames.com/fakk2
OUT TBC

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It uses the *Quake III* engine
- It's based on the cult film *Heavy Metal*
- It's from the makers of *SiN*
- It's got some bird with big knockers in it

"Holy Gods!" Not our words, but those of an adolescent Pennsylvania website writer on seeing a technology demo of Ritual's forthcoming *Heavy Metal*. The occasion was E^3, and the location was a caravan in a downtown Los Angeles car park.

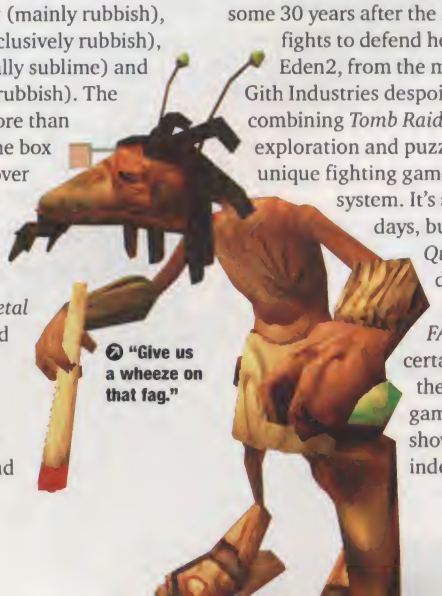
Eschewing the bedlam of the convention centre, Gathering Of Developers decided to display their wares in trailers over the road, luring show-goers with free beer, live punk rock and the trade show standard: hardcore pornography actresses. They also had a slew of games on show, and so it was that ten sweaty men squeezed into a dark trailer for a look at *Heavy Metal*, unaware that the demo was to turn into a live version of *Beavis & Butt-head*. Further outbursts from the pair of over-excited, metal-toothed virgins included: "Okay, question number one: is she gonna get naked?" "Can you pop a stiffy?" and "What's a spliff?" Get out.

The 'she' in question is the star of the game – Julia, aka StarStrider. The character was modelled on B-movie actress Julie Strain (*Lingerie Kickboxer*, *Some Nudity Required*, *Bimbo Movie Bash*, *Lethal Seduction*...). If she does indeed 'get naked', it will be clear for all to see because the action is presented from a third-person perspective, drawing obvious comparisons with the ubiquitous Raider of Tombs. However, Ritual co-founder Robert Atkins claims "she's gonna kick Lara Croft's ass" – something that the two kids at the front would probably pay good money to see.

"Ritual co-founder Robert Atkins claims Julia, aka StarStrider, is 'gonna kick Lara Croft's ass'"

In case you haven't guessed yet, the *FAKK* of the title stands for *Federation Assigned Ketogenic Killzone*, and the game is based on the forthcoming sequel to the animated film *Heavy Metal*. Released in 1981, the original movie is popular among animation bores and features the voice of the late John Candy and a soundtrack from artists such as Black Sabbath (a couple of decent tunes), Blue Öyster Cult (mainly rubbish), Cheap Trick (exclusively rubbish), Devo (occasionally sublime) and Sammy Hagar (rubbish). The movie netted more than $20 million at the box office and sold over a million copies when it was released on video in 1996.

The *Heavy Metal* concept is owned by Kevin Eastman, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and he's given Ritual carte blanche to extend the so-called Melting Pot universe and use artwork and music from the sequel. The game kicks off some 30 years after the film, as Julia fights to defend her homeworld, Eden2, from the marauding Gith Industries despoilers, combining *Tomb Raider*-esque exploration and puzzles with a unique fighting game-style combat system. It's still early days, but with the *Quake III* engine doing its super-curvy thing, *FAKK2* was certainly among the best-looking games at the show. Holy Gods, indeed. PCZ



"Give us a wheeze on that fag."

FIRST ENCOUNTER

A P51 demonstrates the uselessness of the whole B-17 concept.

That's a Norden XK38 bomb sight, meaningless trivia fans.

That'll teach him not to let me bomb his homeland.

Farting in such an enclosed space calls for drastic measures.

Fly individual planes or send entire squadrons to needless deaths. The choice is yours.

You can switch sides and try to shoot down the Yankee scum, should you prefer.

An impressive and beautiful sight. Unless you're a German, of course.

One of your 'little friends' hogs the camera.

B-17 THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

As another old classic from MicroProse's past gets a nineties overhaul, *Paul Presley* flies one, final mission *(Here's hoping – Ed)*

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Wayward Design
PUBLISHER MicroProse/Hasbro Interactive
WEBSITE www.hasbrointeractive.com
OUT November

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Makes a change from single-seat fighter planes
- Combines flight simulator with team management
- Update of an early MicroProse classic
- Multiplayer games enable teams to fly in the same plane

FIRST ENCOUNTER

Anyone remember MicroProse's original, classic *B-17 Flying Fortress* from 1992? Well, for their forthcoming WWII bomber simulation MicroProse haven't forgotten their roots. At face value, *B-17 The Mighty Eighth* seems to be an identical type of game, combining all the pleasures of a heavyweight, highly detailed flight simulation program with the team management delights of a strategy game, just as the original did to such great effect.

Spend longer than the average lifespan of an Italian government looking at the pictures and watching the demo, and you quickly realise that 'update' is as misjudged a choice of word for this game as 'talented' is for Vanessa Feltz. Wayward Design haven't so much gone to town on *The Mighty Eighth* as invaded it, ethnically cleansed the locals and declared a state of independence. Not only can you fly a standard, run-of-the-mill B-17 bombing run, you can also take command of entire squadrons, assign crewmen to all the different planes based on their skills (skills that improve as they fly missions, which means you're likely to be more pissed off than usual if you lose them during a mission), plan entire bombing raids and command (and even fly) the fighter escorts.

On the technical side of things, the attention to detail is just as impressive: the European terrain is supposedly modelled to within 20cm; the aircraft have everything from rotating wheels to oil stains on the windshields; crews move around in full 3D inside the bombers as you issue orders; the flight and damage models are all intertwined; multiplayer games can have up to 32 players with human teams manning single B-17s... The list goes on and on.

"The European terrain is supposedly modelled to within 20 cm; the aircraft have everything from rotating wheels to oil stains on the windshields"

Incidentally, that last one might not sound like a barrel of laughs, but let me tell you, sonny, that one of the most enjoyable multiplayer gaming experiences I ever had was during an online game of *Air Warrior III*, sitting in the tail gunner's seat of a B-17, bombing an enemy airfield, with seven other players manning the other positions. The sense of camaraderie conjured up as we chatted away to each other during the flight, and the team spirit displayed as we entered combat situations, alerting each other to enemy fighters and so on, was beyond anything I'd previously encountered.

Hopefully *B-17 The Mighty Eighth* can capture that same atmosphere and, thanks to the dedicated nature of its gameplay, improve upon it no end. The original was certainly one of the more impressive flight sims of its day, and with any luck this sequel will be able to make the same claim. PCZ

WARNING!

A3D can seriously affect the way you hear!

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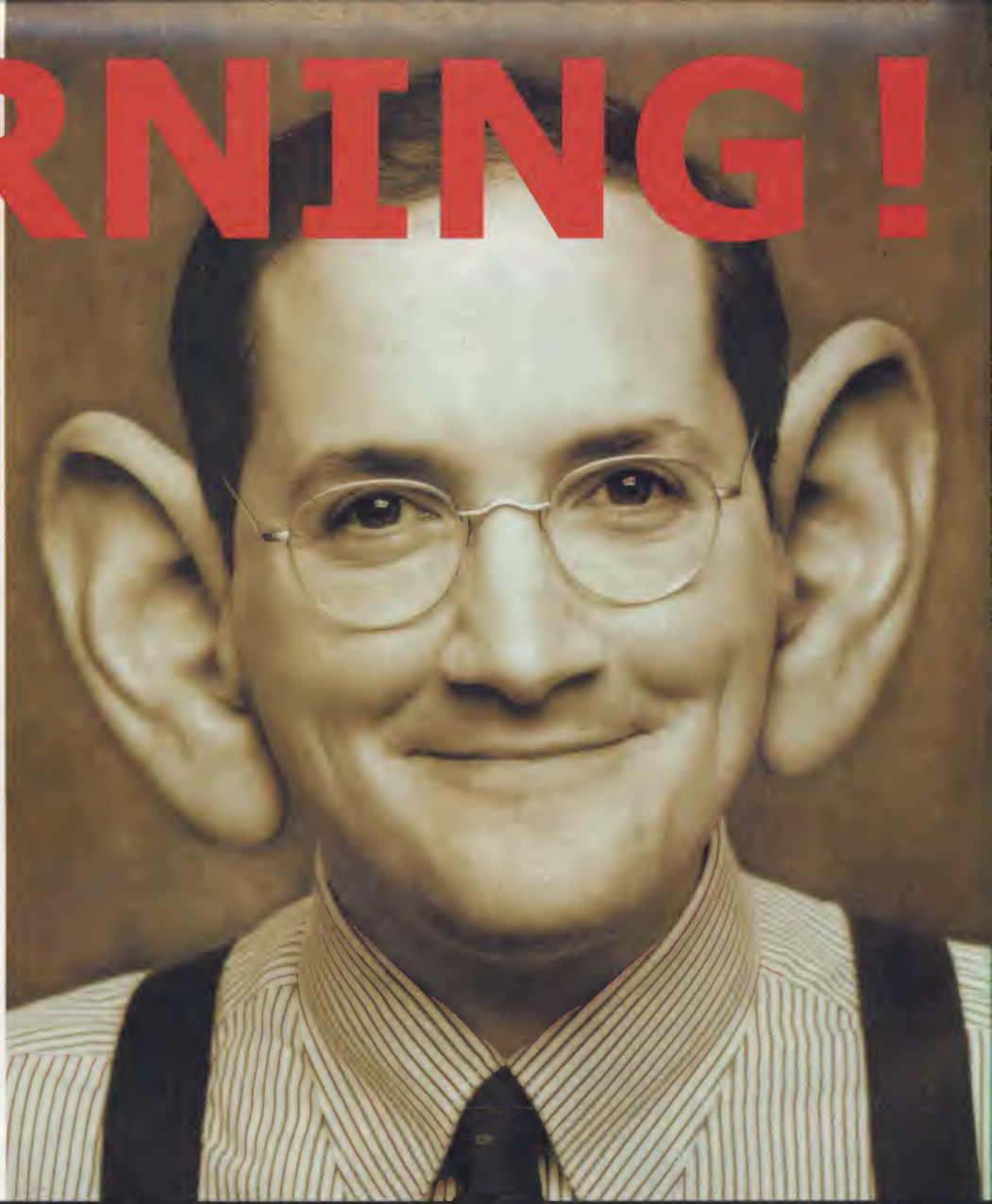
Vortex audio technology from Aureal - the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.



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A3D europe
www.3DSL.com

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Scunthorpe practise for the finals of this year's morris dancing championships.

The use of shadows is as spectacular as the new range of tackles.

FIFA 2000

Electronic Arts are at it again. But – shock, horror – *Craig Vaughan* discovers that this time round it's not just the name that's changed

FIRST ENCOUNTER

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER EA Sports
PUBLISHER EA Sports
WEBSITE www.ea.com
OUT October

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It retains the highest standards of presentation
- They've completely overhauled the 3D engine
- There's tons of league and Cup options
- The AI has been ramped to the max

The *FIFA* series of football games undeniably offers the best representation of soccer on the PC, although of late its dominance has waned. In the last round between the only two real title contenders, *FIFA 99* claimed Classic status (*PCZ* #71, 92%), but was very nearly knocked off its lofty perch by the more varied *Actua Soccer 3* (*PCZ* #72, 89%), which came packed with the Cup and league options so conspicuous by their absence in EA's series. Since then, the *FIFA* bods have been so quiet that the continuation of their biannual updates looked to be in doubt. Fans of the series needn't fret though, because there's a hat-trick of good news to report.

Firstly, there's an all-new *FIFA* in the pipeline, and secondly, when they say 'all new' they mean exactly that, because this time round they've coded from scratch – from the turf up. The last joyous snippet of information – and the one critics have been waiting for – is that they're combining the best bits of the *Actua Soccer* series (multiple league and Cup scenarios) with their own renowned *FIFA* presentation, and a stadium full of in-game enhancements. Those weary of yet another update should reconsider their apathy, because the new 3D engine is set to cause quite a stir, with a wealth of innovative trickery on show. The players' faces are now so lifelike that it's possible to discern their emotions. Which will come in handy, because things are set to get a lot more physical with the inclusion of new fakes, dummies, flicks and trick shots that will lead to a host of devious infringements and retaliations. They've also finally perfected the motion-capturing, meaning you should get instant responses from your players, rather than having that slight delay we've come to expect.

New domestic and International leagues will add the passion of relegation and promotion battles, with European Cup places at stake for the victors. They've covered all the bases this time, even including teams from leagues as obscure as Portugal and Israel. Championship races aside, those who enjoyed the nostalgia of the 'historic game' options in *World Cup 98* (*PCZ* #65, 91%) will welcome the chance to pit their team against a selection of classic sides composed of the best players of bygone eras. Also, there's the welcome addition of cut-scenes to increase the drama, a feature which is enhanced by verbose commentary from the Motty, Lawrence and Waddle. Bearing in mind the BBC's complete lack of rights to decent soccer coverage, those commentators are probably hoping that this series will run for ever, which, while it's on this sort of form, would be a right result.

"Things are set to get a lot more physical with the inclusion of new fakes, dummies, flicks and trick shots that will lead to a host of devious infringements"

Pit your team against a classic side made up from players from bygone eras.

"Sorry, I just didn't see you there."

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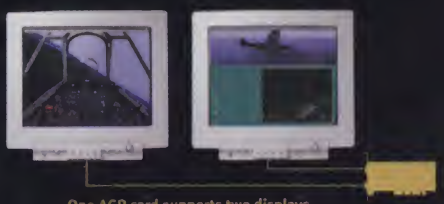
3D Environment-Mapped Bump Mapping



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PC Format
'Quite simply...the best looking, most immersive flight simulation to take flight on the PC.'
PC Review
'...a superbly detailed flight simulation.'
'FLY! offers the best way to get airborne.'
PC Format
'...just about the best way to clock up those frequent flyer points.'
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by Terminal Reality Inc.
IF REALITY HAD A PATENT™
WE'D OWN IT.

There's nowhere in this world you can't go. Real-time moveable sectional charts and interactive vector maps allow accurate navigation across 16,000 navaids in 200 countries, including over 13,000 runways at 9,500 airports.

The aircraft you are about to fly is fully operational. The game features accurate cockpits and avionics, all in the correct proportions and layout of the original aircraft. Every gauge, switch, and knob in the cockpit is ready for interaction, thanks to the most meticulously detailed cockpit to date, with multiple interactive interior views.

It's the most realistic general aviation flight simulator ever created for the Mac and PC. Integrated flight planner and aircraft load out allows visual planning of cross-country flights and user-defined fuel, passenger, and cargo loads.

- Everything from mountain peaks to sea level is accurately represented. The Global Digital Elevation Model (DEM) recreates elevations throughout the world.

- Internet-ready support allows for text and live chat communications with up to 7 other pilots.

- FLY! Now allows you to pilot your aircraft in a variety of pre-configured conditions and scenarios.

- See New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas/Fort Worth, and Chicago in high-detail satellite imagery and stunning 3D models of key buildings and landmarks.

- Native 3D hardware support for Microsoft Direct3D, 3Dfx, Glide, RenditionRedline, NEC PowerVR, and Apple Rave.

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GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS

www.godgames.com

OBSESSED WITH CONSOLES

They can't help it, you see. It's the marketing; the no-problems installation; the arcade perfect-ish gameplay... *PC ZONE* turns to the Dark Side and talks to a console lover about his passion for all things truly plug 'n' play

WORDS Adam Phillips

Before we start, *PC ZONE* needs to get the following off its tanned and rather muscular chest: anyone who enjoys arguments like "my computer is better than yours"; "my console is more powerful than yours" or "my willy is bigger than yours", please sod off. We have no time for such back-to-school banality where some sad types forget vital personality traits such as 'intelligence' to pursue ageing and void arguments about the merits of a Spectrum 48K over a crusty Commodore 64.

People who've never realised just how silly such ramblings are, can usually be found hanging about in Internet newsgroups such as alt.nintendo.owners.are.tossers parrying with same language they were using at the age of ten. Which is pretty poor for a 30-year-old.

Indeed, when *PC ZONE* heard that there was a fella out there who owned 18 consoles and a Mac but no PC, we didn't reach for our Viz Profanisaurus to pluck out some cutting words of bile to spit at him. No, we got into a circle, had a group hug and cancelled our subscriptions to alt.playstation.owners.are.jerks as a 'positive reaffirmation' of our gaming maturity.

So, when it came to asking Jake about what advantages consoles have over PCs, we were able to ask the question through unclenched teeth with a big, friendly smile. "What I like is you just pop the CD/cart in and you're off," Jake explains. "It's ideal for aprés-pub gaming sessions. You don't need to spend 40 minutes trying to tweak the maximum speed out of the machine or resolving a technical 'conflict' before you're able to play the game – they just work, right outof the box. And they look and sound marvellous on my wide-screen telly!"

Dreamcast's 'virtual fishing rod': ridiculous.

Ahem. Okay, a fair point, and well made. So does he rate the PC as a games machine? At all? "There's no doubt it's a great games machine – if you spend enough money keeping up with the technology in graphics and sound cards," states Jake. "But I do really enjoy network games and this is where PCs excel at the moment."

Aha! Networking – not one of console land's strong points.

Do they have any other weaknesses that *PC ZONE* can exploit here? "You can't tweak the console's speed at all," explains Jake, "so if a game is too slow, then tough shit. Network gaming will take a while to really take off with consoles too. I don't believe they should be spending so much time on these network ideas though, because I reckon anyone who's got a console and wants to go on the Internet will already have a PC and a modem. Why not just interface the two?"

FEEDING THE HABIT

Hmm... at this point, we decided that discussing the merits of his iMac would prove too upsetting for us. However, we felt that Jake had justified himself enough to talk safely about his video game system collection without the *PC ZONE* team wanting to leap onto the quickest train to Jake's hometown Blackburn for a spot of fisticuffs with the young console-loving upstart.

And what a collection he has. It started with the Sega MegaDrive back in 1990 and a Gameboy shortly after that. It was only after picking up a second-hand Super Nintendo (SNES) for £50 that he got bitten by the collecting bug: "I sold the SNES, then had to buy another for a specific game," explains Jake. "After doing this about three times, I figured it was pointless selling the consoles

Sega's Dreamcast: coming to a shop near you soon.

CASE HISTORY

PHOTOS Simon Clay

#16 THE CONSOLE LOVER

NAME Jake Smith

AGE 24

LOCATION Blackburn

OCCUPATION A multimedia director at a new media company. He's helped slap together sites for the likes of Golden Wonder, Coca Cola, and the richest rodent on earth – Disney.

OBSESSION The adoration of consoles.

CONDITION BEGAN In 1990, when he was given a Sega MegaDrive for Christmas. If only his parents had known where it would lead.

HISTORY OF CONDITION Over the last nine years, he's acquired some 18 consoles.

OUTLOOK With the PlayStation 2 and Nintendo's 'Dolphin' systems on their way, we'd love to see Jake being sectioned for console gaming addiction. Not because we think he's a nutter, but to see how the *Daily Mail* would deal with it. A "Save Jake From The Evils Of Gaming" campaign, perhaps? Or "Nintendo Nurtures Nutters Shocker"? The possibilities for overreacting are endless

"Trying to get the old systems for as dirt cheap as possible is entertaining, but half the fun is getting them home and being amazed by the crude graphics and sparse sound"

JAKE ON THE JOY OF CONSOLES

When there's nowt on telly, Jake gets his excitement from a bit of virtual fishing.

HOW COULD YOU?!

Feel like deserting us and heading to the land of console? If so, to be perfectly honest – we hate you. If on the other hand you merely wish to extend your gaming experiences and have a Neo Geo tucked up next to your PC, we're more than happy to help. Read on for the best online sources for cheapo consoles...

LOOT

www.loot.com

You can find anything here – from garden hoses to console relics. Make sure that you read their advice on the do's and don'ts of buying second-hand from a complete stranger...

COMPUTER EXCHANGE

www.cex.co.uk

Jake's top place for buying imported stuff from the land of the rising sun, CEX has been round for a while so there's no chance of being shafted once you've put your order in...

TELEGAMES

www.telegames.com

A US-based company, it's worth visiting these fellas to check out ball-park figures for the console you want to buy. And then go and buy it elsewhere for less...

Newsgroups also have plenty of stuff on golden oldie machines. Check out the following examples:

alt.games.lynx
alt.atari.2600
rec.games.video.classic
rec.games.video.nintendo
uk.games.video.playstation.forsale

because you never got the money for the machine that you'd put into it. It was then that the idea of collecting consoles occurred to me."

By the time he finished college three years ago, he'd only managed to acquire four consoles – the fourth machine, his PlayStation, bought from a mate who worked for Psygnosis. But in 1997, things kicked off proper – he got a Nintendo 64 and a Neo Geo, then a Gameboy Pocket for Chrimbo. He went on to rescue a MegaDrive 2, a Mega CD 2 and a Sega Master System from a scrap heap, which cost him bugger all apart from £3 for a Master System game.

At the end of last year, he got a Gameboy Colour, and this year his mates took pity on him – one friend gave him his 3DO, and the other an Atari 2600 which had been rotting in an attic for the last 20 years.

"I then started looking for an Atari Jaguar, checking newsgroups and www.loot.com, until one Saturday I set out to town with the intention of spending some money. Guess what I found? Yup, a boxed Atari Jag, complete with the only game I wanted on it, *Tempest 2000*, for £30. I snapped up a NES on the same day from a second-hand shop for a tenner, still boxed. A pretty good day."

FROM MEGADRIVE TO DREAMCAST

To round off his current collection, he bought the little-heard-of Amstrad GX4000 for a fiver at a car boot sale – "I asked the bloke how much he wanted and he started laughing at me when I got excited" – and a handheld Atari Lynx which he located through the newsgroups.

To add icing to his console cake, Jake bought his current pride and joy, the Sega Dreamcast, on import from a dealer in London's gamer nirvana, Tottenham Court Road.

To date he now has a collection of some 18 consoles, which in all have only cost him £1300. As for the software, it'd cost your average punter something around £3000 for his collection, but Jake loves hanging out at car boot sales and second-hand shops hoping to snap up a bargain.

With such an extensive collection, how much time does he actually spend a week indulging himself? "I spend anything from 6-15 hours a week playing console games," he states, "and an hour per day researching and checking out the latest gaming news."

PC ZONE's lingering question may be an obvious one, but what precisely is the appeal of collecting consoles? "There's quite a bit of history attached to all consoles, and it does interest me finding out about who, why and what made a particular machine great in its time – and trying to get hold of the games that epitomised it," explains Jake. "Trying to get the old systems for as dirt cheap as possible is entertaining, but half the fun is getting them home and being amazed by the crude graphics and sparse sound – and then spending a few hours in a time warp. Also, if you limit yourself to one machine, you'll never really enjoy a good spread of games. Having four or five different types of console and owning the best games for each really provides plenty of gaming choice."

As far as games go though, what does a console really offer over a PC? "They're more arcade-like, fast paced, loud and in-your-face. I love games where you need lightning-fast reactions, like the *Streetfighter II* and *III* series."

This is all fair and dandy but look Jake, let's cut to the chase – are you ever actually going to buy a PC to experience such gaming marvels as *Half-Life*? "I've never owned one, but you never know – I may pick one up some day."

May 'pick one up'? May?! That's it, we've had enough. There's a train leaving for Blackburn at 3.50. Bring knuckle dusters and a copy of Viz's Profanisaurus.

> **"Having four or five different types of console and owning the best games for each really provides plenty of gaming choice"**
>
> JAKE GETS THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

Footnote: PC ZONE heavies Adam "Ard Bastard' Phillips and Charlie 'The Bruiser' Brooker never made it to Blackburn. They were arrested in Aberystwyth after they caught the wrong train and ended up in a slap fight with each other when Ard Bastard suggested that his Spectrum 48K was better than The Bruiser's Commodore 64.

NUTTERS UNITED!

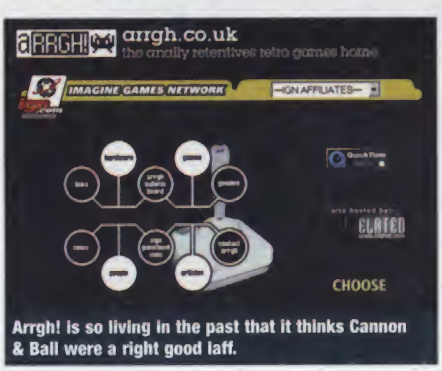
If you're a console freak, there are plenty of others out there for you to meet

Once you've decided to push console emulators to one side and go for the real deal, there are flocks of console nuts out there who would love to meet you. Jake can be found lurking at his homepage at www.systemerror.co.uk/jake-man/ and is sure to offer you some helpful advice if required.

Other notables nutters include Mat Simpson – he runs the Anally Retentives Retro Games Home (www.arrgh.co.uk) that features obscene amounts of info on all things retro computer and console. You can read old features plucked from the pages of *Zzap 64* magazine (circa 1985) or even (and gee, what a scoop) read the inlay card from that class Vic 20 game *Perils Of Willy*!

You have been warned...

This is Jake in 1984 with his first computer, the Sinclair Spectrum. Ahh, bless.



Arrgh! is so living in the past that it thinks Cannon & Ball were a right good laff.

Jake's homepage can be accessed at www.systemerror.co.uk/jake-man/.

CONSOLE-ATION PRIZE?

Well, we'd like to think that consoles are crap, but there's some fair evidence that they've actually been rather good over the years. We asked Jake to slap together a breakdown of some of the best (and oddest) machines he's collected during the past decade

8-BIT

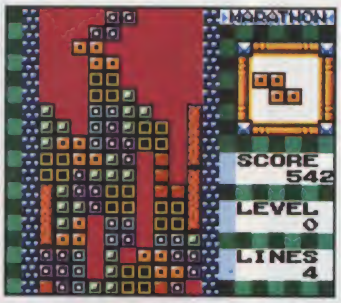
The 2600's Teletext-style graphics, as perfectly exemplified by *River Raid*.

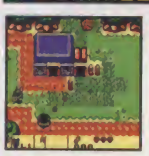
ATARI 2600

Approx second-hand cost: £10-30
Number of games owned: 8
Pros: "Has a cool-looking wood trim on the front!"
Cons: "Games look like Teletext screens."
Top title: "*Defender*. Need I say more!"
Other top titles: "*Pitfall*, *Yar's Revenge*."
Overall rating: ✪✩✩✩✩

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM

Approx second-hand cost: £5-15
Number of games owned: 11
Pros: "Great colours and sprites for its time."
Cons: "Looks very dated now."
Top title: "*Wonderboy In Monster Lair*, a fun arcade/RPG-style game with a lot of depth."
Other top titles: "*California Games*, *Sonic*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✩✩✩





The Gameboy Colour 'shows' off *Tetris* and *Legend Of Zelda*.

NINTENDO GAMEBOY

Cost: £60
Number of games owned: 12
Pros: "Portable gaming of the highest quality."
Cons: "Battery life has got much better, but still..."
Top title: "*Tetris*, the ultimate puzzle game. The definition of addictive."
Other top titles: "*Legend Of Zelda*, *WarioBlast*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

Sonic The Hedgehog: classic gaming from Sega.

SEGA MEGADRIVE

Approx second-hand cost: Don't pay more than £20
Number of games owned: 12
Pros: "Lots of great games plus loads of variety and playability."
Cons: "Some lame games ruined the machine's reputation."
Top title: "*Thunderforce 4* – I love shoot 'em ups, and this was an amazing blast. And it's still great to play today."
Other top titles: "*Sonic* series, *Ecco The Dolphin*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✩

The Lynx's graphics were darn good for a handheld console. And it was cheaper than a laptop.

ATARI LYNX

Approx second-hand cost: £20-30
Number of games owned: 7
Pros: "Full-colour hand-held with awesome graphic abilities."
Cons: "Eats batteries alive."
Top title: "*Klax*, the Lynx version, was a great puzzle game."
Other top titles: "*California Games*, *Slime World*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✩✩

Play arcade-perfect renditions such as *Puzzle Bobble*.

SNK NEO GEO

Cost: £100+
Number of games owned: 2
Pros: "Arcade perfect – since these carts are the same as in the arcade machine!"
Cons: "Hefty price tags from £150 up to £300."
Top title: "*Puzzle Bobble*, an arcade puzzler that's fiendishly addictive but great fun."
Other top titles: "*Metal Slug X*, *King Of Fighters '99*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✩✩

32-BIT

Metal Gear Solid and *Gran Turismo*: enough to make PC owners envious.

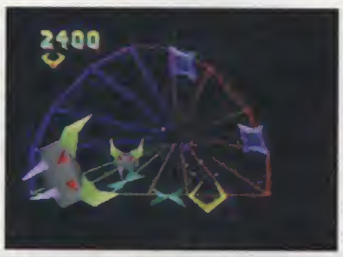
SONY PLAYSTATION

Cost: £99
Number of games owned: 9
Pros: "Sony..."
Cons: "Too many crap games."
Top title: "*Metal Gear Solid* – top espionage action that has you on the edge of your seat." *(Coming to your PC by the end of the year – Ed)*
Other top titles: "*Grand Turismo*, *Streetfighter Zero 3*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

PANASONIC FZ-1 3DO

Approx second-hand cost: £50+
Number of games owned: 6
Pros: "Promised to deliver lots of new standards..."
Cons: "... it failed."
Top title: "*Need For Speed*, a good example of what "Next-Gen" gaming was about. Lots of FMV and polygon shifting."
Other top titles: "*FIFA Soccer*, *Road Rash*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✩✩

64-BIT



Tempest 2000: top arcade action from games hippy Jeff Minter. Shame the Jaguar died a horrible death...

ATARI JAGUAR

Approx second-hand cost: £30
Number of games owned: 1
Pros: "Technically superb."
Cons: "Erm, we needed more games!"
Top title: "*Tempest 2000* – a superb, trippy arcade blaster with amazing music."
Other top titles: "*Defender 2000*, *Aliens Vs Predator*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✩

Adventuring doesn't get any better than *Zelda 64*.

NINTENDO 64

Cost: £99
Number of games owned: 6
Pros: "The usual Nintendo polish applied liberally to this machine."
Cons: "Not enough games, and of those, too many are poor."
Top title: "*Legend Of Zelda*, an epic RPG – it's the best game on any console!"
Other top titles: "*GoldenEye*, *F-Zero X*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

128-BIT

A massive hit in Japan, *Get Bass* is the world's greatest fishing simulator. Er... great.

SEGA DREAMCAST

Cost: £200. Hits stores this September
Number of games owned: 3
Pros: "Cutting-edge gaming."
Cons: "A lot of the public want the PlayStation 2 so they may wait for over a year, rather than enjoying the Dreamcast now."
Top title: "*Sonic Adventure* shows off the power of the Dreamcast to great effect."
Other top titles: "*Get Bass*, *House Of The Dead 2*."
Overall rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

This month we nip just down the road from the *ZONE* office to find out which games are keeping people out of the sunshine

WORDS & PICTURES Richie Shoemaker **LOCATION** HMV Oxford Street, London

DAVID AVISION
20, self-employed textile agent

What's on your hard drive?
"*FIFA 99*, *Tomb Raider III* and *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball*."
I see a copy of *Blade Runner* in your hand?
"Yeah, I don't know whether to buy this or *Grim Fandango*, which needs 32 megs – I've only got 16. What do you reckon?"
Decisions, decisions. Why not upgrade? You can get another 16 megs for £15, then you can buy both games.

RICHARD PANTELI
21, computer technician

What's on your hard drive?
"*Baldur's Gate*, *Half-Life* and *StarCraft* – still. I'm thinking of getting *Tales Of The Sword Coast*, the *Baldur's Gate* expansion."
Bit of an RPG fiend?
"Yeah. I can't wait for *Diablo II*, *Dungeon Keeper II* and the next *Baldur's Gate*."

ROSS WHITHORM
22, student

What's on your hard drive?
"*Fleet Command*,which isn't bad, and *European Air War*. I like military sims. Oh, and *Gangsters*."
Fancy yourself as a virtual Al Capone, do you?
"Well, prohibition America looked like quite an exciting place to be – in the movies, at least. The fashion was cool, it's just the short life expectancy that might be a problem."

MARK PENDRAD
25, British Gas employee

What's on your hard drive?
"*Flight Sim 98*, *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron*, *Rainbow Six* and *Eagle Watch*. I played *Rainbow Six* at a friend's house and became addicted to the multiplayer game."
Has anyone ever told you that you look like Paul Presley?
"Who?"
Paul Presley, son of Morlock. He's a Level 18 wizard. And he writes a few things for *ZONE*.
"Never heard of him."

ANDREW BERNARD
28, oil trader

What's on your hard drive?
"*Half-Life* and Microsoft's *Combat Flight Sim*."
Is that a copy of *PC G*** in your hand?**
"I was just looking at their review of *Hidden & Dangerous*. It looks pretty good."
Well, the game does. What did they give it, 93 per cent! Wildly overrated.
"What did you lot give it?"
Ninety one per cent.

SIMON LAMB
36, company director

What's on your hard drive?
"*Half-Life* with *Team Fortress Classic* and *TOCA 2*. I play online a quite lot."
I bet BT love you.
"I don't actually play online *that* much. Thankfully it's getting easier and cheaper to get connected though."
Looking forward to *Team Fortress 2*?
"Yes. Definitely. *TFC* is one of the best multiplayer games you can get. *Team Fortress 2* is going to be amazing."

MATTHEW JACK
17, student

What's on your hard drive?
"*Carmageddon*. I use my PC mainly for music production."
But when it's not going to plan...
"...I like to get in a big red car and run people over. Just to release pent-up aggression, you understand."
Of course, blowing someone's face off can be just as therapeutic.
"So I hear."

LEE THORNTON
29, senior sales assistant, HMV

What's on your hard drive?
"*Quake III Arena Test*, *Half-Life*, *Baldur's Gate* and *X-Wing Alliance*."
***Quake III*'s not bad, is it?**
"It's going to be a big seller. I've been up all hours playing online. My phone bill will be huge."
Your colleague was just going on about *Midtown Madness*.
"Yeah, we've sold out already. It just came from nowhere and everyone wants a copy."

FLORIAN VOGELGESANG
16, student

What's on your hard drive?
"Can you speak slower, please?"
Oh, you're German. What... is... on... your... hard... drive?
"Oh. *Half-Life*. But I like PlayStation games better. I've got *Mortal Kombat 4*, *Syphen Filter* and *Silent Hill*. There are never any problems with drivers. You just put the CD in and, how you say, voller?"
Voila.

ROB VOWELS
20, student

What's on your hard drive?
"*Civilization*, *Sensible World Of Soccer*, *Worms* and *Championship Manager*."
***CM3*?**
"No, the first one. I've only got a shitty P100. Being a student, I won't be able to afford a new PC until I leave university."
Hence your browsing around the budget section. Don't worry, we've all been there.
"We've got three or four PCs linked up in our house, but I'm usually too busy to play games."

PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call

Activision 01895 456 7000
Blue Byte 01604 232200
BMG Interactive 0171 973 0011
Core Design 01332 297797
Cryo 01926 315559
Crystal Dynamics/Ubi Soft 0181 944 9000
Eidos Interactive 0181 636 3000
Electronic Arts 01753 549442
Empire Interactive 0181 343 7337
Funsoft 01322 292513
Gremlin Interactive 0114 273 8601
GT Interactive 0171 258 3791
Infogrames 0161 827 8000
Interactive Magic 01344 409399
LiveMedia 01865 247714
MicroProse 01454 893893
Microsoft 0345 002000
Mindscape 01444 246333
NovaLogic 0171 405 1777
Ocean 0161 832 6633
Sierra 0118 920 9100
Sold Out 0171 721 8767
Take 2 Interactive 01753 854444
Telstar 01932 22232
Virgin 0171 368 2255
ZABLAC 01626 332233

THE HALL OF SHAME

These are the games that we still haven't been sent for review. This means they're either completely crap and the publishers are scared we'll pan them, or their PR machine isn't quite up to full speed. This month's offenders (some of them have been in our Hall of Shame for some time, eh Maxis?) are...

LULA VIRTUAL BABE Take 2
STREETS OF SIMCITY Maxis/EA
CENTIPEDE Hasbro
MEGAMAN X-4 Virgin
V-RALLY Infogrames

REVIEWS YOU CAN TRUST

We at *ZONE* pride ourselves on telling you exactly what we think. Our writers are the most experienced and talented reviewers in the business. They're all experts in their chosen genre and they won't pull any punches – if a game's not worth buying, we'll tell you why. But we don't leave it there. We also want to know what you think of the games that come out, which is why we've got our Feedback section on page 100. This is where you get the opportunity to get your point of view into *PC ZONE*. If you've got a comment to make, then we want to hear it.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

DON'T BELIEVE THE JARGON

The standard spec machine these days is a P166 with 32Mb of memory – but before buying any game you need to make sure it will work on your system. Because the technical specs on packaging can sometimes be a little optimistic to say the least, make sure you check out the 'We say' bit in our tech specs box at the start of reviews. This is where we report on what we think the minimum tech specs should be. If a game runs like a tortoise on the machine listed by the publishers, then we'll tell you. All the games reviewed are tested on the minimum-spec PC as quoted on the packaging.

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

PCZONE CLASSIC 90-100% Here at *ZONE* we score every game out of 100. If a game receives a score of 90 or above, it is awarded the *PC ZONE* Classic award. These games are original, innovative, compelling and are worth buying even if you're not a fan of the genre.

PCZONE RECOMMENDED 80-89% If a game scores 80-89% it's awarded a *PC ZONE* Recommended award. Games that fall into this category are excellent examples of their type, and if you're a fan of the genre they're well worth buying.

70-79% Games that score in this region don't win any awards, but they're above average and well worth a look. If you're not a fan of the genre though, they will probably offer limited long-term appeal.

20-69% These games are below average and you should really only consider parting with your cash if you're a big fan of the series or genre or you see it at a reduced price.

PCZONE PANTS 0-19% Games that score under 20% should be avoided. They offer little in the way of long-term appeal, can be frustrating, and definitely aren't much fun. If a game is seriously bugged then it will also fall into this category. You have been warned.

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Star Wars: Episode 1 – Racer 100
Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace 100

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

In space no one can hear *Paul Mallinson* scream "*System Shock 2* is here!"

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 24Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D accelerator card **SUPPORTS** All major sound cards and 3D cards **WE SAY** Go for a full install (480Mb), at least 64Mb RAM and, if possible, a TNT-based 3D card for best results

PC ZONE CLASSIC

ALSO CONSIDER

HALF-LIFE (Sierra, £29.99) Less detailed than *System Shock 2*, but a timeless classic which should be played by every PC gamesplayer. *PCZ* #71, 95%

ALIENS VS PREDATOR (Fox, £34.99) Scary action extravaganza based on the famous movie characters. *PCZ* #76, 91%

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT (Eidos, £34.99) This fantasy-based action game plays similar to *System Shock 2* because it uses the same engine. *PCZ* #72, 90%

SYSTEM SHOCK (Deleted) If you can find a copy, the original *System Shock* is still worth a look. *PCZ* #20, 95%

In this day and age, the average PC gaming enthusiast demands a lot from his software. Gone are the days when a game's longevity could be measured by the number of 'screens' you could explore; nowadays we expect more depth for our money, more detail, more story, brilliant graphics and amazing sound. And that's without mentioning multiplayer.

System Shock 2 is a fabulous example of a modern-day computer game. Like its prequel, *System Shock* (first released in 1994), *System Shock 2* is an amalgamation of genres. Although the game's designers think of it as a 'hard-core' role-playing game (see our preview in issue 78), *System Shock 2* is, in truth, a mixture of action and adventure, with serious RPG-related elements keeping the whole thing afloat. As a result of this effective melding of styles, it's one of the most detailed, engrossing, challenging and downright enjoyable 'serious' games ever made.

GREAT INTERFACE

Without beating around the bush (because there's so much to get through here), *System Shock 2* is a sci-fi horror game presented in the first person. The game itself has actually been designed and built around developer Looking Glass' acclaimed *Thief* engine (as previously encountered in the game of the same name), and as such brings the wholesome goodness of *Thief*'s excellent control and inventory systems to the world of *System Shock*.

A crosshair in the middle of the screen shows: a) where your bullets will go if you fire your current weapon by left-clicking your mouse, or b) what you'll pick up or use if you're pointing at it when you right-click your mouse. You move around using the keys, as in *Quake*, and other features such as weapons select/reload, maps and inventories are available through a selection of hotkeys. Instead of *Thief*'s sacks and backpacks though, *System Shock 2* is full of Multi Functional Displays (MFDs), Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) and cybernetic implants, all of which pop up on screen Heads Up Display-style when requested.

It's a simple system in practice, and incredibly easy to understand. The flexibility of the interface is actually one of the main reasons why *System Shock 2* is such a joy to play, because it never gets in the way of the action and is extremely quick and stable.

The mysterious Shodan, the lead protagonist from the first game, makes a reappearance in *System Shock 2*.

The human poly models aren't the best we've ever seen, but thankfully they are well-animated, which more than makes up for it.

"The most suspense ever seen in a computer game"

If you don't use the correct ammo against these robot 'midwives', they'll tear your head off.

Quantum Bio Reconstruction machines bring you back to life if killed. "It's preferable to slow decomposition," .says Dr Polito.

"Anything that gets in your way, human or not, you must kill without pause or remorse."

HALF TRUTH

Not that you'd realise this to begin with. The sheer depth of *System Shock 2*'s gameplay doesn't immediately become apparent when you first begin the game. Starting out on the doorstep of the local armed forces recruitment centre *four years* before the main game story even takes place, you are a potential soldier of the future with nothing to your name. No money, no dignity – not even an inventory. So the only thing to do is sign up, have the necessary cybernetic surgery, then wait for the chicks to take notice.

> "*System Shock 2* is tremendous. It's what the public want – it's a massive, involving experience"

Rather than present the initial 'character generation' sequence as a series of slick menus, Looking Glass have decided to let you enact this part of the game 'in-engine', as they're now calling it (see Train Me walkthrough below). Basically, what this is supposed to mean is that you get to do all your training yourself, to determine what kind of character you begin the game with. In actual fact, this is only partly the truth because – although after basic training you get to choose four 'tours of duty' relating to a career in either the Marines, the Navy or the OSA (Secret Service), and run down a lot of pretty corridors decked with military regalia – you don't actually get to do the missions themselves, which is a bit of a let-down so early on in the game. Despite this fault, the opening to *System Shock 2* is indicative of the game's brilliant sci-fi atmosphere – a mix of *2001*, *Alien* and *Starship Troopers* with heavy technology overtones – and this carries through to your eventual posting on a star cruiser called the Von Braun.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR

Those who remember the first *System Shock* will be familiar with what happens next: suddenly you're woken from cryogenic sleep to find everyone around you murdered. "Did I do this in my sleep?!" you ask yourself. But before you have time to find out for yourself, the game bursts into alarm mode and a voice calls out with the warning: "The compartment is depressurising. Get the hell out of there!" and suddenly you're fighting your way through falling debris and exploding pipes trying to find a way out (while simultaneously filling your pants). Recompense for the earlier false start it most certainly is, and it also sets off *System Shock 2* magnificently.

Things do quieten considerably once you make the right airlock – into the Medical Science block. A quick look around unearths a few blood-soaked bodies, a PDA, some crates, some blue consoles on the wall, a door with a keypad, some wall-mounted information consoles, and a lift. The warning voice heard earlier was that of Dr Janice Polito, a Von Braun bigwig who's still alive on the ship and constantly supplies you with sporadic hints and tips via email. She suggests searching the bodies for keycode access numbers: "Go on, don't be squeamish," she says. You don't find any numbers, but you do find Version 1 Hacking software on one dead guy. If you're not a complete numbskull you'd have probably worked out that this means hacking the nearby door open, therefore revealing its hidden delights.

OLD HACK

Hacking plays an important part of *System Shock 2* – after all, this is a game about technology of the future. The process itself is fairly simple, and gets easier as you find and add software implant upgrades by plugging them into your skull. To successfully hack a door, a security crate, a vending machine, or anything else for that matter, you must match four white (positive) nodes from a set selection of 14. Some of the nodes are negative (black) – hit too many of these and whatever you were attempting to hack will either break or blow up in your face (nasty). Hacking costs money each and every time you attempt it (the denomination in this game being Nanites), and if you find you're on a losing streak you can hit Reset on the hacking panel and start over.

After breaking the code, you then turn your attention to the blue panels on the side of the wall. These things, called Upgrade Stations, play a vital role in *System Shock 2*'s role-playing system, because they enable you to upgrade your skills in any one of four different areas: Stats (strength, endurance, psionics, agility and cyber), Tech (hack, repair, modify, maintain and research), Combat (standard, heavy, energy and exotic) and Psionics (too many to go into here). To advance a level in any of these disciplines you have to collect and spend Cyber Upgrade Units (CUUs) at the nearest available upgrade station, plenty of which are dotted around the Von Braun.

Depending on your initial choice of career, you'll want to spend your hard-earned CUUs on skills that befit your style of play. Joined the Marines? You'll want to pump as many of your resources into Combat and Stats. In the Navy? Your technical skills should be 'maxed-out' as soon as is humanly possible. Signed up for the OSA? Then pick up a Psi amplifier, plug it into your arm (cool!) and buy as many of the 35 psionic disciplines (read: futuristic magic spells) as you can.

CUUs are pretty scarce initially – they're awarded for achieving difficult tasks, or found lying around in dark, hard-to-find corners – and there can often be a fair bit of soul-searching before spending them. That said, dripping CUUs to you in this way prevents you from advancing too quickly and contributes to *System Shock 2*'s incredibly tense atmosphere – the balance between hard work and reward is, we think, close to perfect.

EVIL DEAD

Once you've acquainted yourself with these essential gameplay features, it's then off to explore. Up the lift, out the door, and into the face of the nearest monster… Yes, there are lots of hideous creatures patrolling the Von Braun, from mutant hybrid human beings to over-zealous robots with a penchant for combusting in front of your face.

Grunts (humans turned into zombies by a large parasitic worm buried in their heads) patrol the darkened Medical Science corridors crying out chilling one-liners such as: "Kill me!", "You have left us!" and "We remain!" in a wicked *Evil Dead/Exorcist*, choking-on-your-own-blood kind of manner.

Just like in the original *System Shock*, security cameras keep watch at key locations on the map and alert nearby monsters to your presence if they catch you. These cameras can be heard when you near them, and you quickly learn that your only concern is to avoid detection. Initially, there are two ways to do this. Firstly,

TRAPPED INSIDE THE VON BRAUN

Get to know your way around the ship

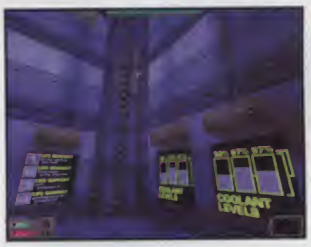
You're caught up in some god-awful mess on a huge self-contained cruiser out in deep space. Familiarising yourself with the inner workings of this vast structure is of the utmost importance. Here's a handy cut-out-and keep guide to help you find your way around…

MEDICAL SCIENCE

This section of the Van Braun is the first you encounter because the cryogenic unit you arrived in is located here. Weird lab experiments abound.

ENGINEERING

Engineering is where the reactor core lies, and is therefore a hotbed of radiation. Watch out for the dark, cavernous (and scary) storage bays.



OPERATIONS

The key to your success lies here. Why? Because this is where all the ship's computers are kept. Warning: there's a very high camera density.

RECREATIONAL

If you're bored, why not nip down to Recreation for a quick bet in the casino? On second thoughts, don't – everyone's dead and it's crawling with monsters.

HYDROPONICS

The humid atmosphere of the Von Braun's hydroponics facility is an ideal place to grow organic flesh-eating monsters. Or so it seems.

WALKTHROUGH

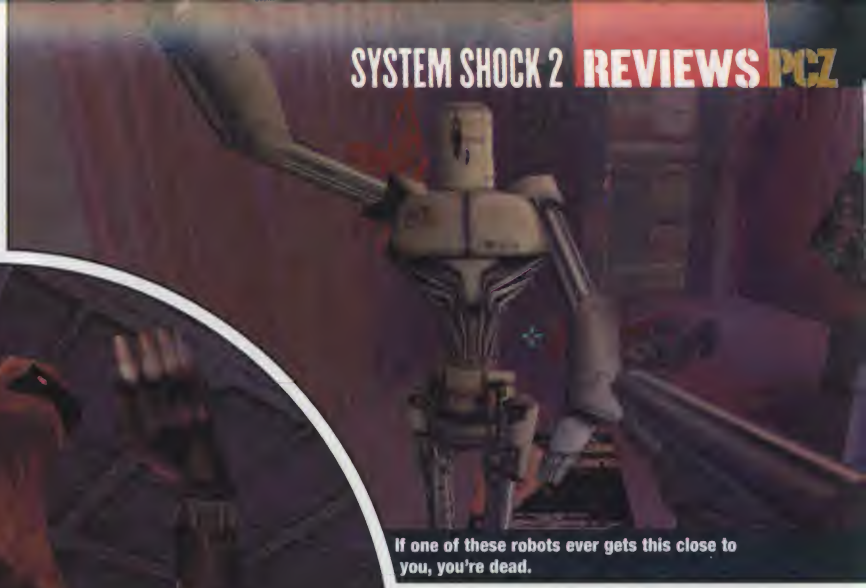
TRAIN ME

Our intrepid Yorkshireman is taken down the local army recruitment centre by his dad…

"'Ere yer go, lad. This'll do yer some good…"

Did you really want to walk right into this?

Check out this Cyborg assassin and his shiny blue throwing stars. Neat, eh?



If one of these robots ever gets this close to you, you're dead.

The grenade launcher is handy for taking out multiple monsters from a distance.

System Shock fans will no doubt get the message.

If it's depth you want, either go jump in the deep end of a swimming pool or play *System Shock 2*.

You can boost your skills by spending Cyber Upgrade Units at these stations. There's even a useful 'undo' if you balls things up.

Most of the Von Braun is made up of large, hub-based levels which branch off from each other.

Chemicals are sometimes required for research.

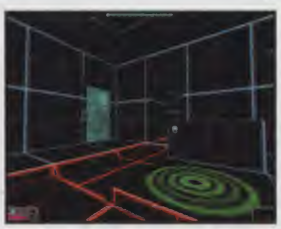
Need to find the Hardware Override...

Hacking is a bit like playing noughts and crosses.

Your worst nightmare come true.

END

2 "Thas bin through basic once befooer. Get thissen inter advanced."



3 "What's tha mean "Ave ah got t'wopen that dooer by 'ackin'?"

4 "Ah think ah'll tek me chances wi't marines..."

5 "Ooh, ah dunt like look a this. Ah might get 'urt, 'ere."

6 "Sod this fer a game o' soldiers. 'Ow do ah buy missen owt?"

That'll teach him to stand next to an explosive crate.

Don't rule out the use of Psionics – they're very powerful indeed.

Aaargh! A swarm of flying worms! How disgusting.

Here's a Residual Psychic Emanation. We think he's trying to tell us something.

Traits are one-off gifts meted out at these light-blue stations. You can choose four at specific points in the game.

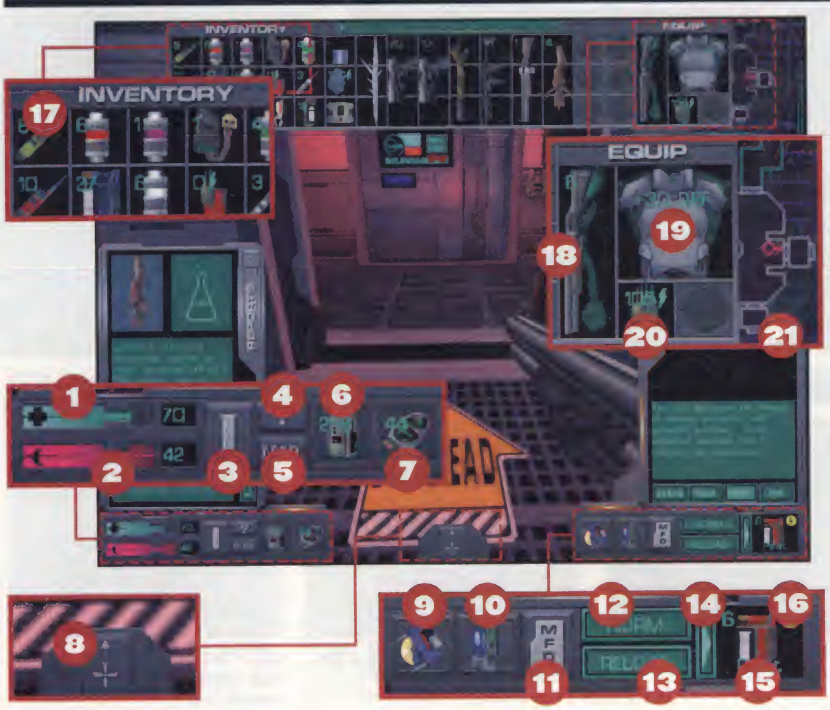
Later in the game you find some experimental alien weaponry.

Why on earth do we enjoy frightening ourselves half to death?

Someone's still alive! But on the other side of a locked door, it seems.

You can lean around corners – just like in *Thief*!

You might as well go and hide under a pile of coats.



HEADS UP!

System Shock 2's HUD-style interface explained

1 Health bar (zero equals dead)
2 Psionic power (diminishes with use)
3 Research (Reports window is above)
4 Info (click this, then click on anything else for a full explanation)
5 Map (includes handy mini-map toggle)
6 Nanites (your money)
7 Cyber Upgrade Units (spend these to improve your skills)
8 Compass
9 Personal Data Assistant (carries emails, logs, notes etc)
10 Keycard Access Recorder (shows which doors you can open)
11 Multi-function Display (details all current skill levels)
12 Weapon fire mode
13 Reload weapon (try hitting 'r' instead)
14 Change ammo
15 Current ammo
16 Weapon condition (10 = perfect, 0 = bust)
17 Inventory (holds up to 45 items max)
18 Current equipped weapon
19 Current equipped armour
20 Current equipped Cybernetic Implant
21 On-screen mini-map

HAND-HELD DIVERSION

You can find (and play) games within the game

***System Shock 2*'s programmers and designers could knock out games in their dinner hour, judging by the amount of detail they've crammed into this particular effort. Take a look at this miniature game console, for example – a fully-functioning device which you find lying around and add more games to as you come across them (there are more than we've listed here). It is surely testament to the attention to detail lavished on *System Shock 2*.**

#1 SUPER PING TURBO CE ALPHA
A simple version of Nolan Bushell's B&W tennis game.

#2 ABYSS
Incredible – Atari's *Tempest*! And it works!

#3 SWINEKEEPER
A pig-stroke-corn variant of *Minesweeper*.

#4 OVERWORLD ZERO
An RPG within an RPG. Can you believe it?

#5 TIC-TAC-TRIOP
While away the hours with noughts & crosses.

Some Grunts carry shotguns, most of which can be repaired or stripped.

What a bloody mess.

you can twat them with the wrench (if within reach), and this will clear the way. This can be hazardous, because if a camera spots you and sets off the alarm you'll suddenly find yourself besieged by monsters until the alarm is shut off by locating and using the nearest security computer terminal. The second (and safest) method is to successfully hack a security access computer, which will temporarily deactivate all cameras in the area, giving you time and freedom to smash them at your leisure.

THE PLOT THICKENS

Further exploration of Medical Science reveals more of the game's wicker basket plot. Dr Polito's emails tell you that the ship's computer, Xerxes, is now in control and that all access to other decks is restricted because the elevators have been shut off. She also explains the use of Quantum Bio Reconstruction Machines (an infrequent feature of the Von Braun, capable of bringing dead humans back to life), and the presence of residual psychic emanations (ie ghosts), which sometimes give you clues as to what you're supposed to be doing. The rest you find out the hard way.

As the plot thickens you begin to fill your inventory with all kinds of techno gadgetry. It's at this point that the true scope of *System Shock 2*'s gameplay becomes apparent. Most items can be used or combined, some even degrade in quality over time and must be periodically maintained or even repaired if broken. Every weapon in *System Shock 2* is subject to these rules, and keeping them in tip-top working order is as easy as clicking on a portable maintenance tool (if you can find one) and dropping it on the relevant weapon in your inventory. Most weapons can also be upgraded to hold more ammo, fire at faster rates, use less charge (in the case of energy-based weapons), or dampen the recoil. It's a fascinating combination of features that add even more depth to an already cavernous game, and gun fetishists – not to mention tech groupies – will love it.

Upgrading costs Nanites and carries an element of risk as well. The process is similar to hacking – find four positive nodes, avoid the negative nodes – but fail and you break the weapon. To repair it you have to go through another similar process, but fail that and the weapon may even disappear forever. It's worth the risk, but you've only got yourself to blame if you mess up – which is the beauty of it.

SOUND MEN TAKE A BOW

Talking of beauty, we haven't yet had a chance to pause for breath to mention the graphics. As you can see from the screenshots here, *System Shock 2* looks shockingly good *(Groan – Ed)*. Looking Glass have managed to squeeze the best out of the latest 3D cards – especially TNT, which looks much better than Voodoo alternatives – and the use of colour, smoke, transparency, translucency, light and dark is nothing short of inspirational.

And stand up Looking Glass' sound designers, because those guys *really* know how to put the icing on the cake. Not because of the music, which *is* sparsely implemented (by today's standards), but because of the incredible sound effects that accompany each and every step you take. And no, we're not talking about footsteps here (even though the subtle sound of boot meeting carpet has been expertly captured), we're talking about monsters that groan in the distance and get louder as they near you; the calming sound of the machine that goes 'ping' in the medical wards; the crackle of the Geiger counter; the satisfying thud of dumm dumms hitting monkey torso; the low, vibrating hum of Xerxes, the ship's computer… those kind of things. Combined, they bring the whole environment to life in a way that has never been seen for as long as this reviewer can remember.

> **"The use of colour, smoke, transparency, translucency, light and dark is nothing short of inspirational"**

The sum of this audio-visual conundrum equals one hell of a gaming atmosphere. *System Shock 2* is hardly a 'jolly' experience, we must note, and unless you're either a) such a tit that you refuse to be scared, or b) a cabbage, it's pretty much guaranteed that you'll jump out of your skin on more than one occasion – it's that gripping. Man-eating worms leap out at you from of alien eggs (haven't we seen that somewhere before?), hideous spiders drop on your head from above, wandering lab monkeys launch psionic fireballs at you… In fact it's one big, bad, scary jungle out there, if the truth be known, and surviving all the way through to the end is not easy – even on the lower of the four available skill settings.

TREMENDOUS

System Shock 2 is tremendous. It's what the public want – it's a massive, involving experience with one single overriding factor that makes it such an essential purchase, and that's the fact that the game is *so* addictive that you won't be unable to put it down until you've solved the mystery and completed the game in full. Days will become nights, and nights will become days as you move from one problem to the next, refusing to leave the game alone until you've "cracked this one last puzzle".

If there *is* a downside, it has to be that there isn't much in the way of character interaction, as was done so well in *Half-Life*, but that isn't the point – in *System Shock 2* you're *supposed* to be out on your own. It's the idea behind the game: you, by yourself, against not one common enemy, but *many*.

There are some great surprises and plot twists too, and fans of the original *System Shock* will be more than satisfied with this sequel after having waited so long for its arrival.

System Shock 2 must rate as having the most suspense ever seen in a computer game. It's almost certainly one of the deepest and most enjoyable role-playing games we've ever played, requiring focus, skill and determination. It's a game you will complete, then play through again: It's nothing short of a classic of its time. Go out and buy it now. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Hugely atmospheric • Gripping storyline • Fantastic graphics • Big scares • Mind-boggling depth

DOWNERS Training a bit of a let-down • Some may find it a little overwhelming • Not many people to talk to

95 A sci-fi horror masterpiece

CIVILIZATION II:

£34.99 • Hasbro Interactive • Out August 16

"*Civilization*? I've heard that word before somewhere," said *Andrew Wright* when we gave him the good news

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** Windows 95/98 and Direct3D **WE SAY** P200 and 32Mb RAM recommended

A city comes under attack from bees, a chess piece and monsters.

Three civilisations are fighting for this part of the world. As usual, the Americans seem to be winning.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

After several reappearances in the budget racks, those all-time classic strategy games *Civilization I* and *II* seem to have spawned new offspring. Unfortunately, with each one being 'fathered' by a different developer, choosing the right revamp can prove difficult.

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri (*PCZ* #74, 92%) just pipped Activision's *Civilization: Call To Power* (*PCZ* #75, 89%) in our book, but they're both hard acts for the new Hasbro-owned MicroProse entry *Civilization II: Test Of Time* to follow. And just to muddy the waters, there's some doubt as to whether *Test Of Time* is third-generation offspring at all.

Okay, it's got 16-bit colour, animated units and terrain, but everything else will be very familiar to long-time *Civ* fans. The scientific advances and city improvements are much the same – at least they are in the normal game – and even the short-cut keys haven't changed.

On the other hand, you could argue that the chance to colonise up to four different but linked worlds at the same time makes it many times more challenging on a strategic level, while the optional fantasy and sci-fi 'flavours' offer something pretty new. Then again, anyone familiar with the official add-on pack *Civ II: Fantastic Worlds* will have seen at least some of that before.

WHEN SEVEN TRIBES GO TO WAR

In *TOT*, the traditional game puts you in charge of one of seven tribes battling for world supremacy or the way to the stars via Alpha Centauri. You must build, expand and enrich your way to the top, using diplomacy, spot-on scientific research or sheer military might to get there. It's the same game again in the sci-fi and fantasy versions, except that the terrain, the wonders, the improvements and the units are all different. Different enough to make you stop and think very hard, on occasion.

"New features, updated animation and graphics, and the extra worlds and scenarios make it still a timeless choice"

In MicroProse's own words, *Civ II: TOT* "improves and expands on a beloved classic", which is probably all it needs to encourage *Civ* die-hards to promptly leg it down to their local software store – they'll certainly get their full CD's worth.

In sci-fi mode, the technologies – adaptive farming and aerology, for example – sound pretty complex, but it soon becomes clear that they correspond closely to traditional *Civ* advances. There are new twists though: your aim is to build a new spaceship to take you home again, but not every scientific advance is available to everyone, so you must steal or trade certain technologies in order to construct it. When you do get access to space flight, you can expand your battle to another planet and an asteroid, all with different terrain and resources. And lots of monsters.

Fantasy-wise, you get four

ALSO CONSIDER

ALPHA CENTAURI (Electronic Arts, £39.99) The best attempt at the definitive third-generation *Civ*, this one is much closer to the mark even if it's in a purely sci-fi setting. Games develop quickly, building is fast and the units are spot on. ***PCZ* #74, 92%**

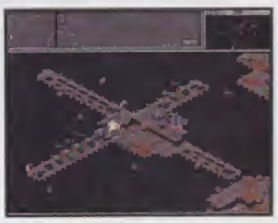
CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER (Activision, £39.99) As detailed as the original and stuffed with as many years of gameplay, *CTP* takes the *Civ* genre even further – but just not far enough. ***PCZ* #75, 89%**

WORLDS APART

One thing about *Civ II: TOT* is that you get to build things in some strange old places...

Underwater elves battle against unspeakable submarine barbarian horrors.

Yes, it's a city built on a cloud. Not sure how you irrigate it or build railways though.



In the sci-fi game, you can even build on orbiting space platforms.

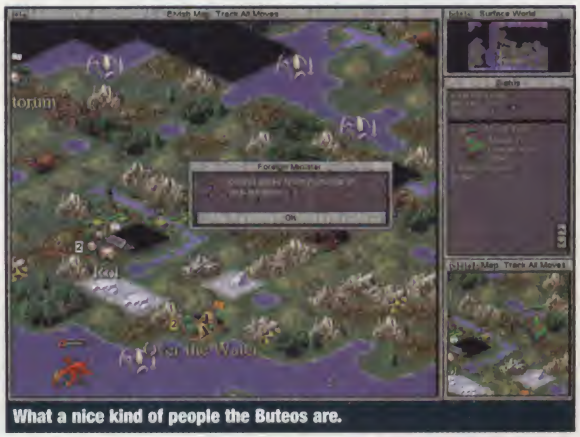
TEST OF TIME

D-Day all over again: an amphibious landing is on the cards, this time on German soil.

One of the Merfolk's lovely cities has been snatched by the ever-present barbarians.

Are these cities surrounded by spaghetti farms, or are they agricultural improvements?

Unit types are displayed as a full list.


What a nice kind of people the Buteos are.

LIVING IN THE CITY

Combat, diplomacy and exploration aside, many of the most important decisions are made on the city screen

This city, with a population of four, is already well-planned with irrigated squares, a mine and plenty of roads. Get used to changing the squares that are being harvested – if you want to produce things more quickly, select squares with shields; if you want to increase the population of your city, choose the squares with more food symbols.

This sci-fi city (population seven) is well-connected with space-age transport tubes and has plenty of juicy city improvements. It's producing rapidly, but has zero growth. Note that in the sci-fi game CD

symbols (data) replace trade. If you're used to the 'old' *Civilization* city screen, all is not lost. There's a menu option for just that purpose, with the same information presented in the same old way.

worlds to play on – earth, air, undersea and underground – and all are linked by magic portals, caves and tunnels. You play one of seven fantasy races in the battle to colonise and dominate all four of them. Races include your 'normal' humans, elves and goblins, as well as Stygians (undead), Merfolk (an underwater race) or the flying Buteos. There's even a Mindgard scenario in which you battle to save the world and put together a giant siege engine before the Dark Lord awakens. To do that you must carry out a dozen linked quests too, which adds extra spice as you still have to manage your civilisation at the same time.

The extended game is much like the normal one, except that when you do build the spaceship that would have won you the game and taken you away from Earth, there's a lot more work to do – like take over yet another planet, a gas giant, the odd star systems, and battle an alien race. The objective is to get back to Earth by building a faster-than-light spaceship *(Impossible in reality, of course – Science Ed)*. Yes, we're talking a lot of gaming hours here.

CH CH CH CH CHANGES

There have been gameplay tweaks along the way too. Advanced settlers and engineers can no longer ignore zones of control and build cities in your territory. They can also be automated to improve the city squares without human input. One or two attack ratings have changed, and there's a new concept of impassable terrain for land units to struggle with. All the changes are covered in the manual and the comprehensive Civilopedia, although the latter is a little disappointing in its bland approach and heavy use of text.

There's a lot more depth and interest in the various end games, too, particularly in the extended, fantasy and sci-fi games, where winning isn't as easy as it looks and a gung-ho bloodbath won't do you any favours. The diplomatic and exploration/build AI is much improved, and enemy units seem to spend far less time marching pointlessly backwards and forwards. Unfortunately they still do the same dumb things in combat, like piling multiple units into one square to be knocked off by the next heavy unit to come along (if one unit loses a combat, all the others in the square are wiped out too).

The multiplayer element is now embedded neatly into the main game, rather than bolted on as an added extra as it was before. You can play across the Internet, a LAN, null modem serial cable or even via a rather dubious hot seat. While your opponents are moving their pieces, you can micro-manage your cities and overall strategies, instruct diplomats, determine caravans and so on. This helps blend the play smoothly so that you don't feel you're hanging around waiting for a slow opponent. In any case, the host can specify a minimum turn time and a few other things.

So is it all good news for Hasbro and MicroProse? Not really. As well as one or two obvious omissions, *TOT* is let down by the new 16-bit animated graphics that don't quite come off, especially at high zoom levels and in worlds where there's a wide range of terrain types and tile improvements. Throw in the expanded number of units on top of some downright weird terrain types, and recognition can get very awkward at times. The most astonishing omission is that there's no build queue, which one might have thought was an essential feature by now. Just to rub salt in, there's no map or scenario editor either, although *TOT* will load maps from the earlier version of *Civ II*.

So what have we got here – *Civ II* with knobs on, or a third-generation upgrade of one of the world's best-known strategy games? It matters not a jot, even for existing *Civ II* owners. The game's new features, updated animations and graphics, and the extra worlds and scenarios make it still a timeless choice for turn-based strategy fans. Faults or not, it's different but it's still *Civ*. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Timeless gameplay • Endless strategic options • Challenging AI

DOWNERS Fuzzy graphics • Too many terrain types • No editor • No build queue

84 It might be different, but it's still *Civ*

OUTCAST

£34.99 • Infogrames • Out now

If you thought *Star Wars: Episode One – Racer* was a disappointment, you'll know how *Charlie Brooker* feels. He was really *really* looking forward to playing *Outcast*

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** P300, 64Mb RAM recommended. And you need 500Mb of free disk space. Yes, you read it correctly, that's *500 sodding megs*

Oops. And it was looking so good for *Outcast*. Waaaaay back in 1998, it must've been, we were at the E3 show in Atlanta, having *Outcast* demoed to us, and by crikey we were impressed. A huge, richly detailed world! Hundreds of intelligent characters to interact with! Dialogue! Depth! Idiosyncratic Frenchness! Zillions of weapons! Amazing effects! Full orchestral score! It's like playing a movie!

Yes, we liked the look of *Outcast*. We liked the cut of its jib. We figured we were looking at a future classic.

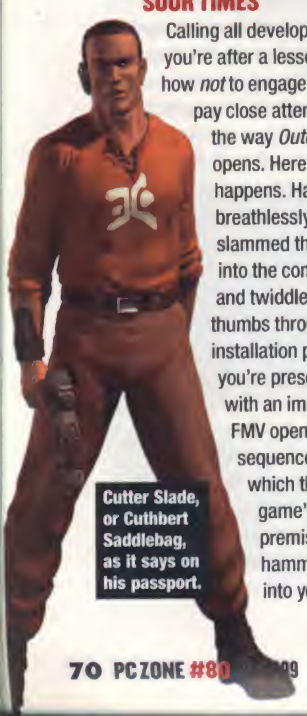
Well, by now you've glanced at the score. And you're asking yourself what went wrong. So we'll tell you.

SOUR TIMES

Calling all developers: if you're after a lesson in how *not* to engage a player, pay close attention to the way *Outcast* opens. Here's what happens. Having breathlessly slammed the CD into the computer and twiddled your thumbs through the installation process, you're presented with an impressive FMV opening sequence in which the game's basic premise is hammered into your eyes, ears and mind. Trouble is, despite the cinematic ambience (nifty camera angles, full orchestral score and so on), it's a crashing bore: it's all talk, talk, talk. The story's *far* too dull to recount in full (blah blah research lab… blah blah… parallel universe experiment… blah… unforeseen problem… blah blah… Planet Earth endangered… blah blah blah) – the upshot is that you, yes *you*, must guide Cutter Slade, square-jawed renegade hero type, as he journeys into a mysterious alien world on a quest to save the Earth.

So far, so snooze-o-gasmic. But then… *but then*… having patiently resisted the urge to hit 'Escape' all the way through the over-long opening salvo, guess what? You awaken in an exotic otherworld and are immediately subjected to an interminable conversation with a goat-faced oddball in a cape, who witters on and bloody on about what a weird and wonderful place this parallel universe is, continually using utterly baffling 'alien' phraseology to describe things. Still, you reason, it's the very start of the game, so you may as well sit tight. After all, this character's probably imparting important information, right? Right.

Eventually, having ground your teeth to a fine calcium grit, the conversation comes to a welcome end and you nip outside to start exploring. At which point your eyes go "ooh" and you begin to suspect that *Outcast* might actually turn out to be a very good game indeed.



Cutter Slade, or Cuthbert Saddlebag, as it says on his passport.

Yes. Because when you first start to ramble around the landscape, it's hard not to feel a tad overwhelmed. See, technically at least, the visuals are fantastic. *Outcast* uses a weird 'voxel' type engine which leaves everything looking blocky and a bit 'lo-fi', but also allows your computer to chuck around huge vistas of complex terrain, lighting effects and other assorted visual jiggery-pokery without breaking into a digital sweat. It's not to everyone's taste. There's been much animated debate (well, okay, a few moments of low-key muttering) in the *PC ZONE* office about whether *Outcast* looks 'retro' or not. Some can't get past the blockiness. Yours truly can,

> **"A few neat tricks aside, the combat sequences are awkward and unexciting"**

and since I'm in charge for the duration of this review, the official *PC ZONE* line is that the game looks brilliant, even if it feels a bit like wandering around the cover of a Yes album.

There's plenty to do. You can wander up to anyone you see and start talking to them (or fighting with them if they're nasty). You can climb on to the backs of creatures and canter around, feeling for all the world like Bernie Clifton in a hilarious ostrich-riding sketch. You've got weapons. You've got *loads* of nifty gadgets, like zoom-in binoculars and holographic decoy devices. You can sneak up on soldiers, crawl across snow drifts, go swimming in lakes. All the world is there.

YAP, YAP, SODDING YAP

But, this being an adventure, if you want to get anywhere you have to complete a series of tasks – and this is where the trouble begins. If you want to know what's going on, you soon discover that there's a lot of talking to be done. A lot of *really boring* talking.

Now, the storytellers are doubtless proud of the intricate fantasy world they've created. They've put a lot of thought into it. They've come up with a weird alien expression for practically everything. Scarcely a moment goes by without a character blurting out a new word. You must go and talk to the Mons, they'll say. The *what*? The Mons? They are the leaders of the Talan. The *who*? Didn't you know? They inhabit Shamazaar, which is in the grip of the Fae Rhan. The *which*? Open your mouth to speak and, within seconds, even the simplest of exchanges congeals into a dispiriting trudge through a quagmire of Crap Alien Terminology (see panel, opposite).

And they *all* talk like that. All of them! And not just for a few moments, oh no. They bang on and on and on… for ages. Ask a straightforward question and they're off, jabbering like an astrophysics student trying to compose a particularly verbose and impenetrable end-of-term thesis on the fly. It drives you crazy. We wanted to hurl rocks at the bastards. And Cutter Slade himself isn't any better. He wisecracks at every opportunity, and although some of his lines are genuinely amusing, his incessant sub-Bruce Willis smart-arsery soon grates.

Once we'd done getting angry with the cast, we worked on getting angry with the rest of the game. A couple of hours in, it transpires that a few neat tricks and lighting effects aside, the combat sequences are awkward and unexciting – and really don't warrant further description. The much-vaunted AI doesn't seem to do much except cause the occasional character to run or attack, while the exploration largely consists of uneventful rambling and disorientating teleport jumps. There's no sense of immediacy or excitement. Bottom line: it's *boring*.

SO YOU DIDN'T LIKE IT, THEN?

No. In fact, it's hard to remember the last time a game got us this annoyed. It's the disappointment, y'see – we were genuinely looking forward to *Outcast*. And we really tried to like it. You should've seen us straining in front of the monitor, grimacing, desperately attempting to wring enjoyment from the thing. But no. It's just a big, fat, sprawling mess.

To summarise: a technically dazzling and potentially awe-inspiring piece of code has been crushed beneath a tedious narrative, bloated by wilfully obscure dialogue, lumbered with an uninvolving combat system, and ultimately drowned in its own delusions of grandeur.

You know what that is? That's *moidah*.

ALSO CONSIDER

LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2 (Electronic Arts, £39.99) We've got nothing *per se* against games set in ludicrous fantasy worlds – at least, not when they're done well. *LBA2* is a cracking example of an equally surreal French action-adventure that rocks bells because it's taut, focused and full of instantly engaging action. Ooh, la la!

PCZ #54, 93%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Unique, dazzling visuals • Open-ended gameplay • Huge environment with lotsa characters • Some funny lines

DOWNERS Far, *far* too 'talky' • Baffling plot • Unexciting combat • Too much unfocused rambling

62 Technically impressive but tedious

"Doncaster's changed," thought Cutter as he strolled around the marketplace.

Ouch. That probably hurt quite a lot. Anyone got any Savlon?

Note dreary conversation topics.

What is this, *A Very Outcast Christmas*?

"And then, right, I bumped into that Tracey Shaw..."

Cutter Slade leaping into a teleporter like a great big arse.

The water moves and everything. The graphics are incredible.

These things are Twon-Kas. You ride them. No, not like that.

CRAP ALIEN TERMINOLOGY

The fantasy language in *Outcast* is craaap

If they ever write the *Berlitz Guide To Talking Like A Character In A Z-Grade Science Fiction Epic*, they could do worse than plough through the *Outcast* lexicon. The dialect featured in the game is a textbook example of the sort of embarrassing 'fantasy language' you find in those breezeblock-sized sci-fi 'novels' read by masturbatory loners and insular dweebazoid pitysacks. Perhaps that's why they called it *Outcast* – so the target audience would feel at home.

Anyway, that language: the most glaring irritant is the use of superfluous adjacent letter As. Shamazaar, Ranzaar, Mutazaar... you name it, it's in here. You even have to use a device called the "Gamsaav" to save your position. Oh, *please*.

Lookee here. When you're playing an adventure game, you want a sodding *adventure*, not a crash course in some stupid made-up language. A few alien words and phrases would be fine – but *Outcast* lays them on with a big bloody spade. Which it wouldn't call a 'spade' anyway. No. It'd call it a 'zpaaaad' or something stupid like that. Well, it can poke it.

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MiG ALLEY

£34.99 • Empire Interactive • Out now

Ye gods, another flight sim. But *Simon Bradley* thinks that maybe, just maybe, this one's different

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** D3D card
WE SAY A P266 with 64Mb RAM and you're flying

ALSO CONSIDER

EUROPEAN AIR WAR (Hasbro, £19.99) Better ground graphics and more aircraft, but without the variety of opponents. Probably the best of the rest. *PCZ #71, 87%*

FALCON 4.0 (Hasbro, £34.99) Heavyweight flight sim with gorgeous graphics and an intricate campaign model. Arcade pilots need not apply. *PCZ #72, 95%*

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR (Infogrames, £29.99) Still regarded by many as the last word in combat flight sims, and with some justification. An essential purchase. *PCZ #68, 95%*

PCZONE CLASSIC

MiG Alley works on more levels than the average flight sim. Sure, you get the normal 'jump in a plane and go shoot at things' mode, but you also get a pretty neat campaign manager. And you get to plan your missions properly as well, if that sort of thing lights your candle.

You're offered a selection of US aircraft, and one of two variants of the Soviet MiG 15, plus a variety of missions. It all works surprisingly well: think of your favourite strategy game, then add the ability to actually fly the missions you've set up. You kill the targets you've specified – or not, of course, but we'll come to that in a minute. The mission planner is easily the most comprehensive since *Falcon 4.0* (*PCZ* #72, 95%), the campaign takes place in real time, and if you kill a target it stays dead for a decent length of time.

And it looks bloody marvellous. The ground still looks a little like someone's taken a photo, put some contours on it and then stuck 3D objects on top (presumably because that's how it's been done), but the whole look and feel is so immersive that such a small flaw pales into insignificance. And the aircraft look fan-bloody-tastic. They're fully recognisable, and you can shoot bits off them, while any damage your own plane incurs is visible too. You can see contrails when the weather is right, fuel leaks, fire, smoke – everything. You get a smudge of grubby oily smoke when you crack the throttle open, and the engine takes a while to spool up, which is a nice touch. All the control surfaces move, and fuel tanks, bombs, wings and so on drop off, so yes, you can break the plane without the help of Ivan the Terrible. The G effects are well implemented, in fact probably the best yet seen in a flight sim. Even the padlock view, which was a let-down in *Flying Corps* (*PCZ* #48, 92%) works pretty well.

TELL US ABOUT THE FLYING STUFF

I've yet to fly an early '50s jet fighter in real life, but having flown later ones it appears that the flight models are pretty accurate. Rowan have concentrated on what they see as the two most important aircraft – the MiG and the F-86 Sabre – so the others have suffered a little, but that doesn't make them *bad*, just not quite as different as they might be.

Rowan have obviously done their homework, and all the nasty things such as transonic buffet and aileron reversal which lurked around the corner waiting to bite your bum have been modelled – it's a nice surprise to try and pull out of a power dive only to discover that nothing works as it should. And you can pull out so hard that the wings start climbing while the rest of the plane keeps diving. At this point, ejecting is normally a good idea.

And there's more. The missions themselves are enjoyable, and the enemy AI is a variable you choose – but if you crank it up then Ivan/GI Joe is gonna be a whole lot better than you are. And early jets weren't exactly built to take lots of punishment – a good burst of gunfire and they go down. Which is fine if you're on the right end of the guns, not so cool if you're not.

If any criticism had to be made, the biggest gripe would be that despite the fact that we British got sucked in quite early on and had some fantastic aircraft, you only get to play as an American or a baddie. Oh, and some of the voices are a bit iffy.

"All the control surfaces move, and fuel tanks, bombs, wings and so on drop off, so yes, you can break the plane without the help of Ivan the Terrible"

As we said, the ground isn't perfect – *European Air war* (*PCZ* #71, 87%) is better in that respect – but that's about it. *MiG Alley* is hard work at the highest settings, but definitely worth persevering with. PM

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Excellent flight model • Unusual location • Lovely graphics • Brilliant planning elements

DOWNERS Ground graphics a bit weak • No Brits • Not enough aircraft

90 Hard work at highest settings, but worth persevering with

Er, my aeroplane's broken.

That's you in there.

How *not* to do it: overshooting an F-86 in a MiG 15. Oops.

Another mission completed successfully.

You see that? He was on my side of the road!

Hey, I'm so cool I can have the roof down in the snow.

My BMW opponent prepares to go mowing.

NEED FOR SPEED: ROAD CHALLENGE

£39.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

One of the finest looking road racers yet. *Phil Wand* looks at whether the game beneath is galvanised Audi or rusty Skoda

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P200 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** TCP/IP, IPX, modem and direct cable multiplayer **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM and an accelerated 3D card recommended

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

BREAKNECK (THQ, £29.99) One of the most superb-looking games yet. A massive range of cars, and a mind-boggling 192 variations of track. *PCZ* #78, 89%

CARMAGEDDON II (SCi, £39.99) Without doubt the most deranged driving game there is. Scores are based not on your speed, but on your lack of sanity. *PCZ* #69, 95%

TOCA 2 (Codemasters, £39.99) The amazing *TOCA 2* is still the king in terms of driving feel and realism. If you like Touring Car, buy this game now. *PCZ* #76, 93%

It's half past four on a stifling Friday afternoon, and you're sitting in heavy traffic. You've adjusted your pose so the blonde in the neighbouring lane gets your conk from its most flattering angle. You've watched the fat-head in the Mercedes laugh theatrically down a mobile phone. Now you're trying to ignore the blimp in the Transit who's dredging his ears with a McDonald's straw. As he plunges the plastic tube back into his milkshake, you feel an overwhelming desire to sell the car, abandon the urban sprawl and retire to a small cottage in Shropshire.

Electronic Arts' *Need For Speed* series has always been about getting away from the drudgery of real-world motoring. Ever since its initial release on the ill-fated 3DO, countless wannabe racers have gone damp at the thought of thrashing and crashing cars they couldn't afford to hire, let alone own. They've stepped into the game's hi-res virtual showroom, browsed the catalogue of exotic supercars, and then howled into town in the fastest, reddest Ferrari they could find.

WHAT'LL IT DO, MISTER?

The original *NFS* (*PCZ* #31, 89%) focused on head-to-head racing with a computer-controlled lunatic called Mr X, *Need For Speed II* (*PCZ* #50, 78%) followed on with split-screen arcade racing and less of the realism, and *Need For Speed III* (*PCZ* #69, 91%) improved things no end with 3D-accelerated graphics, more cars, and the chance of playing cops and robbers. Now there's *Road Challenge* to make you feel a necessity for velocity.

Old hands will notice straight away that Electronic Arts have added prize money, meaning you can save up for a faster model or upgrade the one you already have. In single-player Career mode, everything revolves around cash: the game kicks off with $25,000 in the bank and no car. At this early stage there's only one vehicle you can buy – the desperately unexciting BMW Z3. So after drooling over outlandish rocket ships like the McLaren F1 GTR and Lamborghini Diablo SV, like us you'll be forced to settle for the base model Beemer. If you really can't hack the German hairdryer, try arcade mode, which gives you unrestricted access.

> **"Tracks are grouped together in different locations, each with a core theme and staggering attention to detail"**

Tracks are grouped together in different locations, each with a core theme and staggering attention to detail. In Europe, British roads are marked with white dashes and policed by officers with Home County accents; in heartland America, the roads are snaked with double yellow lines, and the gunslinger cops drive Jeeps. You can even elect to drive the roads back to front and/or mirrored, giving a huge variation of available circuits, and with a 3D accelerator everything glides into view with silken ease.

DRIVEN BY YOU

The Z3 is certainly the easiest to drive. It doesn't wag its tail on every corner and, if you manage to squeeze anything more than 120mph out of it, it's when going downhill on a long straight. The brakes, however, are on the effeminate side, and as tyres shriek in protest you notice long threads of black rubber curling away behind you. Strange, because every car in the line-up has ABS fitted as standard; most boast traction control as well. There are other curiosities, such as the way you can hear birdsong over the sound of a V12, or the pitter-patter of rain when you're caning a Porsche. We'll just put it down to EA's artistic licence.

Side by side with some tosser in his McLaren.

Another car with another headlamp out thanks to my driving skills.

Numerous cameras cover every possible racing angle.

With a suitably beefy 3D card, draw distance is impressive.

You'll never take me alive, copper!

Off-road, Ferrari style.

Hairdresser spin-dry.

Hairdressers, start your engines!

Some of the mean machines you can drive in *Road Challenge*.

As for other cars, none are as user-friendly as the Z3. At the top of the shop, the McLaren F1 GTR is monstrously difficult to drive, reaching 100mph in around six seconds and the nearest lamppost two seconds after that. The car was built for the Mulsanne straight, and not for Milton Keynes, so it's hopelessly impractical on almost every track. Considering the whole game revolves around your aspirations to buy the fastest car possible, this presents something of a dilemma.

Opponents are tough and always on the case. The pack is balanced by boosting the speed of trailing cars, meaning you're always fighting off a last-second lunge for the line. Our only real complaint with the AI is that it's often too aggressive. The game includes an all-new damage model, meaning you have to pay for what you break, and psychotic rivals who smash into you at every opportunity are more than mildly aggrieving.

Need For Speed: Road Challenge gets its name from one of the features of the single-player game where you take part in a win-or-bust contest with another driver: lose the race, lose your car. But that's not all. The game also retains its predecessor's Hot Pursuit mode, where you get to play the part of a cop or robber. Classic mode puts you in the seat of a police car or as one of two racers trying to make their escape, Getaway lets you keep going until you're caught or do the catching, and in Time Trap you must complete a set number of laps in a preset time period. Become successful as both cop and robber and you unlock bonus cars.

Every driver looks like a crash test dummy out on a day trip.

THE CHEQUERED FLAG

Despite a number of new options, new cars and stunning surroundings, *Road Challenge* still feels like a mild revision of its predecessor, and many of the unique features which set the game apart from its rivals are now missing. For example, oncoming traffic. The first instalment had you weaving in and out of other cars, looking for overtaking spaces and yelling at the screen when a Volvo had the audacity to honk at you. This latest game does away with other vehicles, leaving you racing along empty roads and through ghost towns. Hot Pursuit mode spices things up with the odd motorist, but for the most part it feels like the *Need For Speed* world is stuck at five o'clock on a Sunday morning.

We also found it impossible to control the cars with a wheel or joystick. We're not sure exactly why, but we had to resort to the keyboard just to get around in one piece. There are also a few areas where this game – make that every damn driving game – screws up, most obviously in terms of engine noises, which are never anything like the real thing. Pipe the sound of a Porsche through a decent stereo and, instead of the glorious cacophony of six cylinders in boxer formation, all you hear is an irate bluebottle.

If you like the *Need For Speed* series, consider adding *Road Challenge* to your library. If you don't, consider *Breakneck* or wait for *Driver* instead. PCZ

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Amazing scenery • Most tracks good fun • In-game economy, trophies and upgrade shop • Damage model • Choice of driving modes

DOWNERS Poor sounds • Little in the way of oncoming traffic • Faster cars hopelessly impractical • Not that significant an improvement over the old game

83 *Need For Speed* 3 1/2

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*Available end of July 1999.

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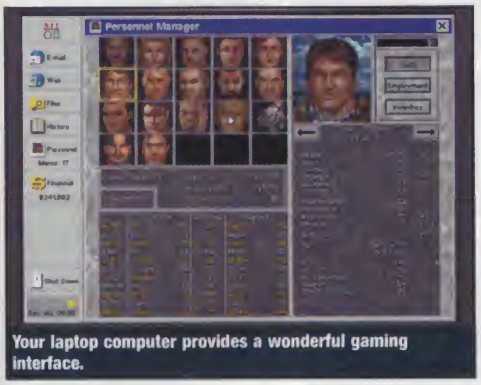
Many of the locations are camouflaged and easy to miss.

Your troops in action, revealing the less than impressive graphics.



Your laptop computer provides a wonderful gaming interface.

The player stats and inventories can be called up within the main game screen.

Trading is an important part of the game, and there's a huge variety of accessories on offer.

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2

£34.99 • Talonsoft • Out August

It looks poor, sounds peculiar, but works very well – just like *Craig Vaughan*, in fact

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** It doesn't use – or need – a 3D card, and the specification is spot on

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

ALSO CONSIDER

X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE (MicroProse, £39.99) The final word in strategy gaming. Overflowing with atmosphere and sporting a revamped graphics engine, this will keep you going for ages. *PCZ* #52, 95%

COMMANDOS (Eidos Interactive, £39.99) A wonderful but extremely difficult team-based stealth 'em up that requires a lot more brains than brawn. Perhaps even too difficult for its own good. *PCZ* #66, 87%

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING (Electronic Arts, £39.99) Bullfrog threw in a spanking new 3D engine and a whole host of stunning spells, but it was all over far too quickly. *PCZ* #70, 92%

Although entitled *Jagged Alliance 2*, this is actually the third instalment in the series, following on from the original *Jagged Alliance* (*PCZ* #28, 72%) and its expansion disc *The Deadly Games* (*PCZ* #47, 79%). This outing is a team and turn-based role-playing, strategy and resource management affair, an ambitious melding of genres that plays superficially like *Commandos* (*PCZ* #66, 87%), but demonstrates strong *X-COM 3: Apocalypse* (*PCZ* #52, 95%) leanings too.

SCOURING THE NET

Controlling up to three squads of six mercenaries, you're tasked with organising and executing a military coup on behalf of a deposed foreign government. Looking at the screenshots, you're no doubt balking at the sight of such dated isometric 3D graphics (which belong somewhere back in 1996). However, beneath the shoddy exterior is some remarkably lifelike animation, and a control interface approaching perfection, turning what could have been a multiple keypress nightmare into a game you can control almost entirely with a mouse.

The front end is a mock-up of a laptop computer that provides access to an Internet scarier than the real thing. It's here that you can browse the personal statistics of an army of mercenaries (stats which, for a change, have a massive bearing on their performance), hire goons and acquire arms. You soon learn that mercenaries are a disposable commodity, so don't go getting attached to them. Once into the action, you see that the play screen is just as carefully considered. It's uncluttered and intuitive, enabling instantaneous control of a single man or an entire squadron at the click of a button – even multiple combat actions are a cinch to pull off.

GRUNTS WITH BRAINS

As well as being a dream to control, the game boasts an array of touches that showcase the impressive AI. Ask your troops to enter a building, and instead of just blundering in they use both entrances, anticipating ambushes. Find your path blocked by an obstruction and your troops work round it, scaling fences or clambering through dense undergrowth rather than feebly awaiting further orders. And although the action is turn-based, it's executed superbly: if one of your mercenaries disturbs the enemy during their 'turn', they take positive action of their own volition, instead of standing blindly by. This 'interruption' cuts both ways and adds a degree of tension to the proceedings that is furthered by the way your players' personal attributes govern their actions: an experienced SAS trooper can complete a number of actions within his turn – running for cover, taking up a prone sniping position; a nine-stone medic can only take a pot shot, or tend to the wounded. This may not be realistic, but it does call for careful resource management and advance planning if you're to make progress.

Speaking of which, the missions offer plenty of variety and are played out across relatively small maps, with navigation between each conducted via a sub-screen or by stealing enemy transport. Unfortunately, while the novice mode is farcically simple, the advanced settings can be too taxing. No doubt this problem and the dated graphics will deter many, with the turn-based combat frightening off others. That's their loss though, because – all things considered – this is a war that's definitely worth fighting. PZ

> **"Beneath the shoddy exterior is some remarkably lifelike animation and a control interface approaching perfection"**

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS It's instantly accessible and user-friendly • Low-spec gamers can enjoy it too • The AI is very well implemented • Totally engaging gameplay

DOWNERS Stale graphics • Tough as old boots • Some of the accents and dialogue are dreadful

80 A rough diamond, but a jewel nonetheless

HEAVY GEAR 2

£39.99 • Activision • Out now

A heavy Gear puts up a brave fight.

The gear's not as dodgy as it first seems, discovers *Keith Pullin*

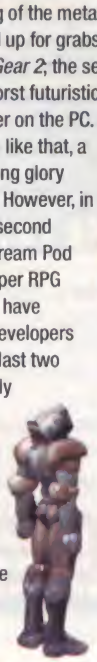
TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P233 with a good 3D card is what you really want

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

When it comes to first-person giant robot games, *MechWarrior 3* (*PCZ* #78, 85%) and *Starsiege Universe* (*PCZ* #76, 88%) are setting the pace. Curiously, neither of those games actually achieved *PC ZONE* Classic status, so theoretically the crown for the undisputed king of the metal monsters is still up for grabs.

Cue *Heavy Gear 2*, the sequel to one of the worst futuristic robot jaunts ever on the PC. With a pedigree like that, a surprise crowning glory seems unlikely. However, in Target Games' second adaptation of Dream Pod 9's pen-and-paper RPG universe things have changed. The developers have spent the last two years completely rebuilding the despairingly bugged *Heavy Gear* in admirable Steve Austin fashion, with the excellent new light-sourced Dark Side engine at the heart of it all.



HAZY SHADE OF WINTER

Heavy Gear 2 takes your standard non-stop action robot game a little further by adding a big, fat dose of 62nd-century stealth. In fact, comparing *Heavy Gear 2* to *MechWarrior 3* or *Starsiege* is just the start of it. Because of the new engine, gameplay is closer to *Thief: The Dark Project* (*PCZ* #72 90%) and *Hidden & Dangerous* (*PCZ* #79 91%). Sure, there are more than 40 'Gears', with a brazen offering of Gatling guns, rockets, lasers, particle accelerators and pretty much every other weapon of pure destruction ever encountered, but what you have to remember is that these nifty 'little' exoskeletons measure a mere five and a half meters tall, maximum.

Such slight frames mean plenty of commando-type fun and games. Your highly mobile Metal Mickey can lie on its belly, crawl to the crest of a hill and pop off distant enemies with a long-range sniper rifle; running, kneeling and diving for cover under a hail of missiles are part and parcel of most of the single-player game's 37 missions. Cunning is what gets you through this epic struggle, and an overhead tactical map of the level adds strategic substance by enabling you to organise your troops' movements precisely – *Warzone 2100*, almost.

The enemy forces are also clued-up on battle tactics. They dodge and weave all over the place while piloting a formidable assortment of walking, hovering, rolling and flying machines. If damaged, they do their utmost to get the hell out and find reinforcements rather than die like mindless cannon fodder. AI, it seems, is spot on.

A stealth indicator shows how visible you are to your foes, and with the added intrigue of having missions throughout the day with varying degrees of light (not to mention changing weather conditions, with rain, snow and lightning), the stealth indicator becomes a pivotal part of the game.

Managing the rest of your squadron is something else you need to master. In true *Wing Commander* style, each of your ten-strong team has a different personality. Your current mission dictates how many and what type of pilot you need, and care must be taken to avoid potentially disastrous personality clashes.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The eventful (if linear) plot is easy to follow and relatively interesting. Basically it all kicks off when a terrorist bomb explodes on your home planet of Terra Nova. By slowly working your way across the universe via a plethora of rocky, swampy, icy and generally inhospitable planets, you discover that Earth is responsible for the bombing. Yes, Earth. Our lovely, peaceful, benevolent homeland is the aggressor in all this, and is thrusting its greedy paw across space in an effort to claim Terra Nova as its own.

And why not? Terra Nova's a nice-looking place, with atmospheric 3Dfx-only graphics courtesy of the aforementioned Dark Side engine. The trees look solid, textures on all surfaces are convincing, and special effects such as dust clouds and transparent water are among the best around. It doesn't stop there. The rest of the universe is equally impressive. The only disappointments are the Gears themselves which, contrary to the rest of the game, seem bland and devoid of colour or imagination.

> **"A commendable stab at creating a balanced blend of strategy and all-out bot-blasting action"**

But then maybe that's because you can create an almost infinite number of them by using the Modify Gear screen. This kind of option is usually more trouble than it's worth, with screen after screen of pointless information about techie things you never knew you had or didn't care about anyway, but here it's actually a joy to give birth to these new creations and see them succeed in the task they were created for.

IN AT THE DEEP END

The in-game interface isn't tamed as easily. Controlling your Gear is a waking nightmare: legs go one way, body goes the other. We're talking contortionist robots here. If it wasn't so frustrating it would be amusing. So if virtually insurmountable learning curves put you off, don't even think about buying this game. Frankly, you'll end up harming yourself – or somebody close to you.

You can't even rely on the training mode. The tutor's voice sounds like a depressed life insurance salesman, and the tasks you're asked to perform are tedious to say the least. There's only one thing for it: dive straight in at the deep end with a trusty sniper rifle at your side. Campaign, instant action or historical battles are your killing fields, or you can choose to log straight in to the well-populated multiplayer world.

When everything does finally click into place you won't want to let go. *HG2* is a commendable stab at creating a balanced blend of strategy and all-out bot-blasting action. But does it claim the crown? Sadly, the awkward control system prevents such a triumph. Apart from that, *Heavy Gear 2* is a huge improvement over its predecessor and highly recommended. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

MECHWARRIOR 3 (MicroProse, £39.99) Well-crafted robot blaster with great graphics and a good control interface. Can be a bit tough for novices though. *PCZ* #78 85%

STARSIEGE UNIVERSE (Sierra, £39.99) Wonderful atmosphere, amazing graphics and great single-player and multiplayer gameplay. The current benchmark of the genre. *PCZ* #76 88%

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT (Eidos, £44.99) Lots of sneaky, lurking action dripping with atmosphere and suspense. *PCZ* #72 90%

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS (Take 2 Interactive, £39.99) Classic commando escapades for extremely patient types. *PCZ* #79 91%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Interesting story • Loads of missions • Great graphical effects and lighting • Loads of Gears, vehicles etc • Easy-to-use Gear modification interface

DOWNERS Steep learning curve • Tricky control interface • Average sound effects • Basically unoriginal • Dull-looking Gears

81 Tricky at first, but eventually fun and rewarding

THE BEST OF THE REST

Here we profile a few of the pilots who might obey your every command – if they're in the right mood, that is

Mailliaux Formidable pilot, but finds it hard to respect others and follow orders. Good to have around, but a bit of a loose cannon.

Kage Elite pilot, but the recent death of his family has caused him to behave unpredictably in combat.

Temple Possesses exceptional talent, but suffers from a lack of self-confidence. Yet to prove herself.

Wallis His devout religious nature puts him directly at odds with anybody who doesn't share his beliefs.

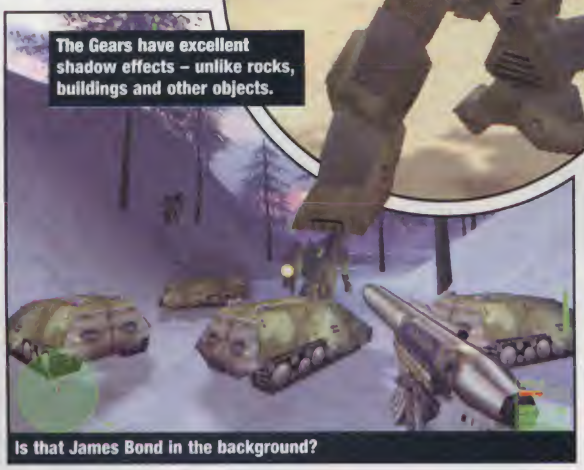
Vesping An experienced pilot who values life, and if at all possible prefers to avoid combat rather than kill.

Pulciano Born on Caprice, so cultural differences make her wary of the other pilots.

A cloud of dust is churned up as your adversary weighs up his options in the rain.

This spidery thing is about to die. After its legs have been shot off, of course.

Another successful team effort reduces the Earth scum to fiery debris.



The Gears have excellent shadow effects – unlike rocks, buildings and other objects.

Is that James Bond in the background?

Aaaaaargh! If you thought controlling your Gear on the ground was difficult, try it in space.

A long-range missile scores a direct hit with the help of the sniper zoom.

Even the gloomy weather hasn't deterred this brave hovercraft.

MULTIPLE GEARS

Heavy Gear 2's multiplayer game is well-conceived and well-supported on the Internet

Click on the multiplayer option and you're instantly informed of all active *HG2* servers. Click on the one you want to join and away you go down the Net. We managed to appear on a Spanish server, and caused a bit of a stir when we unwittingly slaughtered our Hispanic team-mates due to a slight communication problem. Still, if you join up with gamers who speak your language, you can partake in a variety of CTF missions and one-on-one duelling tournaments. You can even find a thriving clan structure and plenty more. It's a whole new world out there.

The screen you see when you choose to play multiplayer over the Internet.

fight the power

mechwarrior 3 pc cd rom

The awesome power of the Mech series continues with new weapons, new 3D environments and whole new levels of utter destruction. Taking the battle into the 31st century, 'MechWarrior 3' will blow you away.

Virgin **MEGASTORES**

That'll be your thermonuclear devastation, then.

Good to see that the Russians are making themselves viable bad guys once again.

"Did I tell you, comrade, I'm only two days from retiring. Then I'm gonna go home and marry my girl... Do you hear something?"

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

£34.99 • NovaLogic • Out early August

Run for the hills, *Paul Presley's* got his finger on the nuclear button

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 (P200 without 3D card) **Memory** 32Mb RAM
WE SAY Not sure about the P133 bit. We suggest a PII machine at least

It's difficult to know whether to take NovaLogic's flight sims seriously or not. Part of the problem is the company's unwillingness to accept that they're not at the forefront of heavyweight flight sim realism, but that they're no more hard-core than an Electric Blue video directed by your grandmother.

When NovaLogic started, they had a gimmick – voxels (don't ask for an explanation, we've never really understood how they worked). This was pre-3D acceleration though, and as technology continues its inevitable march towards the enslavement of all mankind, the strange pixelated worlds that the various Comanches, Raptors and Lightnings inhabit have become as redundant as talent on daytime TV.

Rather predictably then, *F-22 Lightning 3* embraces the world of 3D acceleration, combining their voxels with all the usual Glide and D3D hoo-hah to create something that actually looks pretty decent – still a little blocky close up, but generally pretty good. Not quite on a par with something like *F-22 Total Air War* (*PCZ* #68, 95%), but perfectly acceptable by today's ridiculously inflated standards.

SHADOWLANDS

Without the voxels to rely on, NovaLogic have had to throw their weight behind a few different gimmicks to attract the crowds. The first is the use of nuclear weapons. The only other flight sim we can remember that deployed nukes was *F/A-18 Korea*, and they were pathetic. *F-22*'s nukes are actually a lot of fun (er, if you see what I mean). The first time you drop a nuke on a target and find yourself desperately trying to outrun the resulting shockwave effect is a blast. However, that old adage 'drop one nuke and you've dropped them all' quickly comes into play.

The other gimmick is the online play via NovaWorld, NovaLogic's proprietary Internet gaming service which, as always, works pretty well. Few instances of lag are evident, and the service always seems fairly well-populated. The new feature on offer is Voice-Over-Net, real-time audio communication with other pilots. But how well this works is unclear, since whenever I tried to test it, no one else online was using the feature. Still, they were all Americans, so it was probably for the best.

> **"There's never any feeling of progression, no attempt to draw you in for longer than a quick blast"**

GIMME YOUR LAST PLANE

The best way to sum up the game is this: when you sit down at *Total Air War*, you feel as though you're actually taking part in a realistic portrayal of modern aerial warfare. You're on CNN. Shit matters. With *F-22 Lightning 3*, you feel as though you're in a Hollywood movie (albeit a pretty short one). The music is dramatic and ties into the on-screen action, the radio chatter adds tension to each situation and makes you feel like Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* (or, to a lesser extent, John Gedrick in *Iron Eagle*), and the missions are designed in such a way that they help progress each mini-storyline rather than simulate real-world situations.

It's an arcade game. A fairly sophisticated one, sure, but an arcade game plain and simple. There's never any feeling of progression, no attempt to draw you in for longer than a quick blast. The campaigns are utterly pointless, being just a series of linear single missions stuck together. But while you're in the air it's fun and playable. No more, no less. NovaLogic would do well to realise this in the future. They make good games, but lousy simulations. PCZ

ALSO CONSIDER

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR (DID/Infogrames, £39.99) The heavyweight F-22 sim of choice. This one feels real and looks superb, as well as having an extensive real-time campaign engine to boot.
PCZ #68, 95%

FALCON 4 (MicroProse, £39.99) Another heavyweight flight sim, this time in an F-16. Also has an extensive campaign engine which some reckon is better than *TAW*'s.
PCZ #72, 95%

MIG-29 FULCRUM/F-16 MULTIROLE FIGHTER (NovaLogic, £24.99) Two games in one from the NovaLogic stable, both suitable for beginners or action junkies, both using voxels, and both cross-compatible on the Net.
PCZ #70, 81%

PCZ VERDICT

UPPERS Fun while you're flying • Looks decent • Good online play

DOWNERS It's not a simulation by any stretch • No real long-term prospects

70 Lightweight fun, but limited appeal

Another harmless embassy building bites the dust.

Greenpeace take a more drastic approach.

And the world is once again safe for corporate oligarchies everywhere.

ULTIMA ONLINE

The two online RPG giants are going head-to-head in the UK for the first time. *Chris Anderson* has lost any semblance of what could reasonably be described as a life to both of them

It's no secret that gamers from all over the world have been enjoying the delights of multiplayer gaming on the Internet for quite some time. And if you took a blind bit of notice of our How To Play Games Online feature in issue 78, you should now be one of them, hooked up and raring to go.

But wait. Forget first-person shooters, forget real-time strategy – role-playing is where it's at. Real live people from all over the world are waiting to meet you and talk to you in the guise of the fantasy character you've created. Transfer your lack of personality from your real self into your virtual self and annoy just about everyone you meet with your lousy grammar and amusing spelling mistakes. Sounds too good to be true, I know, but with the help of the two games under review here you can become that virtual nightmare you've always dreamed of. Let us show you how it's done...

Electronic Arts • £34.99 +£6.32 per month, first 30 days free • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Don't make us laugh. 32Mb memory minimum is an absolute must, and 64Mb is preferable

PC ZONE CLASSIC

ULTIMA ONLINE: THE SECOND AGE

Both the games on test here set out to achieve the same thing in different ways. They both attempt to create a living, breathing fantasy world in which the character you've created can progress from a fledgling hero (mage, warrior etc) into an accomplished veteran in a thriving online community. But first things first, let's create a character.

Careful what you do here, this is your character for a long time.

CHARACTER CREATION

The way your character develops throughout *Ultima Online* is very much dependent on the skills you choose on this screen. Put a lot of points into magery, for example, and you'll be well on your way to becoming a competent magic user. You'll also need to choose a trade skill at this point so you can make money. Magic users normally choose tailoring so they can make clothes to sell on to tailor shops; fighters have a reputation to uphold and so will often choose a more masculine profession such as lumberjack, because it builds strength. But even if you mess up completely here and choose skills that aren't particularly relevant to your 'path' through *Ultima Online*, all is not lost. The beauty of this game is that your skills evolve depending on how you play: cast a lot of spells and your magery will go up; fight often with weapons and your melee combat skills will increase. Or you can choose a mixture of both, creating a sort of mage warrior (this is frowned upon by hard-core role-players). Either way, once you've created your character and given him/her a name (you can call your character anything you like, unlike in *EQ*, but more on that later), you're ready to enter the world and interact with other players, which of course is what it's all about.

GETTING STARTED

People in the game are generally very friendly and you'll have no trouble finding other players who are willing to help out 'newbies' who haven't a clue what they're doing (ie you, to begin with). In fact, simply standing by the location you start off in looking dazed and confused (which you probably will be) is often enough to prompt a more experienced player to take you under their wing and give you better clothes and equipment. Nice people, clearly. But some of them will be helping you in the hope that they can persuade you to join their guild and boost their numbers. Accept their assistance anyway, and when they ask if you'd like to join their guild say: 'No thank you, I have several important meetings over the next few months which will take up all my time.' The reason for this is that you'll be better placed to choose the guild that's right for you when you're more experienced and have a better understanding of the game. So basically you've taken advantage of this kind person and then told them to sod off once you've got what you wanted. You're a disgrace.

The next step is both the easiest and the most enjoyable: talk to people. Lots of them. *UO* encourages player interaction on every level, from simply standing around in the street chatting to hunting in the wilds and meeting other players to team up with, to buying and selling in shops and asking advice on various aspects of the game. Players will give you hints on armour and weapons, and tell you which areas are safe

HOW MUCH MONEY DO THEY WANT?

Online gaming can be expensive, in more ways than one

Both titles reviewed here have an additional monthly cost on top of your phone bill, plus of course the cost of the games themselves. But it's a minimal charge in both cases, and a small price to pay for the continued enjoyment you get from each one, and it helps pay the developers' cost of constantly upgrading the games to add new features to them. So stop whining.

All the info you need on your character is at your fingertips.

VS EVERQUEST

Sony (sold by Electronic Boutique in the UK)
• £34.99 +£6.32 per month, first 30 days are free • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Nonsense. You need at least 64Mb RAM for *EQ*, and I had to upgrade to 128Mb to get the thing running totally smoothly. Now's the time for that memory upgrade, folks

"You'll be completely, totally and profoundly useless at everything to begin with"

Dragons are not to be messed with in *UO*. No, really.

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

EVERQUEST

Many of you will no doubt have taken one look at the *Ultima Online* screenshots and come straight to this part of the head-to-head. That's understandable. *EverQuest* is a beautiful game, as you have probably noticed already. But graphics aren't everything. Depth of gameplay isn't one of *EQ*'s strong points, but if you insist on buying it purely on its looks and find it's a little shallow for your tastes, no problem, come back here and refer to the *Ultima Online* review and you'll find that all your prayers have been answered. Onwards, then...

EQ's character creation, complete with comedy names.

CHARACTER CREATION

There isn't a hell of a lot to creating a character in *EverQuest*. Choose your class (warrior, palladin, wizard etc) and race (human, wood elf, barbarian and so on), allocate a few points to things like strength and intelligence, choose your starting location and off you go. If only that were true. There's one extraordinarily frustrating part to the character creation process in *EverQuest*, and that's simply deciding on a name – each one has to be submitted to the *EQ* servers for 'approval'. If the name is already in use, you're out of luck. Which is fair enough, as there's no point having two people on the same server with the same moniker, but *EQ* can reject your name on the grounds that it's not suitable for a role-playing environment. Which is staggering. I spent about 30 minutes having one name after another rejected because it wasn't considered 'appropriate' by the powers that be. However, there is an option to have the computer think up a suitably shite RPG name for you in order to save you all this trouble. Do you really want to be called Aaarknikhon – or worse? No? Well, they're all like that, I'm afraid, or even more horrendous. If you want a name you can even vaguely identify with, be prepared to spend an age throwing suggestions at the server until it finally decides it likes one of them. *EverQuest*, then, has the most incredibly stupid character creation system in the history of RPGs. Not a good start. But it gets better from here – much better, in fact.

An *EQ* dragon in action. Yesterday.

An orc camp. You don't want to get this close to it in the game.

The meditation screen. Spell-casters see this a hell of a lot.

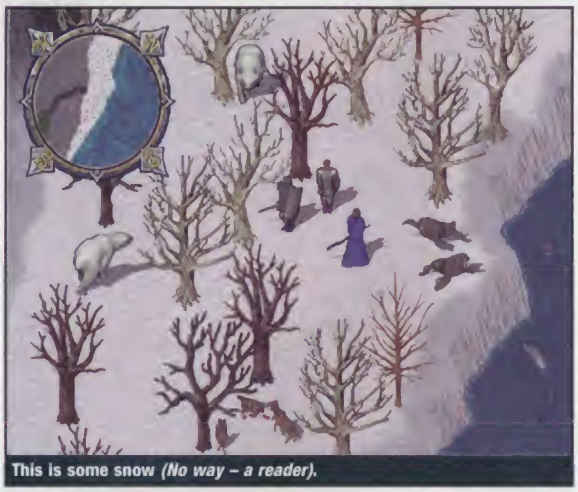
Character info, obviously. *EQ*'s interface, like *UO*'s, is super-friendly.

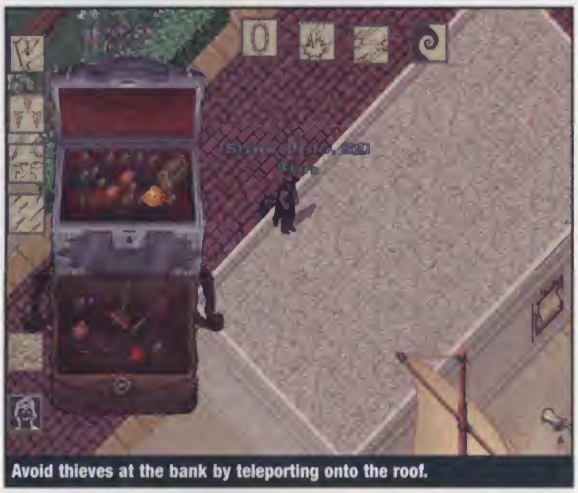
GETTING STARTED

EverQuest is a much easier game to get your head round than *UO*, simply because it's very linear. Your character advances in levels, and the general idea when you start is to run around twatting really easy monsters close to your starting location. If you get into trouble you can always run to the guards, who will kill whatever's giving you grief. For everything you kill, you get a set number of experience points; accrue enough experience points and you advance to the next level. Unlike *UO*, where you spend all your time talking to people as soon as you get into the game, you'll spend your first day or two in *EQ* bashing things in order to gain experience points and 'level up'. There are other characters around to chat to, but everyone is usually too busy trying to get to their next level to be bothered talking to anyone else. The exceptions to this rule are people who like to 'group'. It's possible to team up with other players and share the

to hunt in (well, some of them will, but others are complete bastards and won't tell you anything). At this point you'll delight in discovering your new environment and how to make the most out of the wealth of information available to you in the form of other people who've been playing the game a long time. And no doubt you'll be itching to get outside the city and get involved in a bit of a fight. Well, sorry, but you can't – you'll be completely, totally and profoundly useless at absolutely everything to begin with. All your skills will be so low that the first rabbit you take on in the wilds will tweak your nose and call you a wuss before kicking your head in. You need to train. In a gym. With dummies. Punch them, stab them, club them to pieces, and slowly but surely your skills will improve: swordmanship, fencing, even hand-to-hand will all go up after you've spent a long time in the training area. Sooner or later, however, you'll be ready. You've got a dodgy set of cheap armour, a budget-price sword, and are ready to brave the terror-filled areas outside the city gates. You are about to enter the

Training with dummies is not as boring as it sounds. Oh, okay, it is.


This is some snow *(No way – a reader).*


Avoid thieves at the bank by teleporting onto the roof.

Banks get very busy, hence the lag-monster rears its ugly head.

This is a very dangerous dragon.

This is my very dangerous Energy Vortex spell.

most controversial combat set-up ever seen in a virtual reality videogame.

DEATH OR DISHONOUR

Ultima Online is home to many monsters. Some are easy to kill, some are very difficult, and you'll find no shortage of beasties to take on wherever you go. But as much of a headache as these things can be they're nothing, *nothing* compared to your biggest enemy in the game: other player-controlled characters. There are people who play *Ultima Online* with the sole intention of killing other people and stealing everything they own. These people are called player killers (PKs), and there is a *very* large section of the *Ultima* playing community who hate these people with incredible intensity. Many PKs tend to prey on new characters who don't have the equipment or skill to fight back, or, worse still, they travel in large groups and pick out lone travellers as they make their way from one city to the next.

There are two sides to this argument. Most of *UO*'s law-abiding citizens will argue that it's simply 'not fair' for PKs to kill other players and take all their things. The PKs will in turn argue that they're 'role-playing' evil characters, and this necessitates taking advantage of lesser players. Forget both these arguments, they're irrelevant. Player-versus-player combat (PvP) is so indescribably tense and exciting that you'll soon forget minor details such as who's right and who's wrong. Play a bad guy hunting down innocent human prey, play a good guy searching out PKs and bringing them to justice, but for God's sake play *one* of them or you'll be missing out on one of the most amazing multiplayer encounters of your life. Forget *Doom*, *Quake*, *Half-Life* and all the real-time strategy games you care to mention, the first time you come up against a real player in *Ultima Online* your hands will literally be shaking. You will not be able to function. You won't be able to find the shortcut keys on your keyboard. The spells which you've conveniently placed at the top of the screen will suddenly seem miles away, and your eyes will constantly be darting to your health bar to see how much life you have left before you die. This is not a visually rewarding experience, nor is it the most complex combat system in the world, but the fact that you will lose *everything* you are carrying to the other player if you die (including that ludicrously expensive suit of armour you just bought and stupidly decided to show off in the dungeon from hell) lends an edge to the battle that you will never experience in any other game. In short, it's all or nothing, and for that reason alone most players will run immediately to get away from PvP. But they're fools. Take my advice: get your combat and magic skills maxed up as quickly as you can and take to the dungeons in search of other players to mix it up with. You'll eventually overcome your

UNITED WE STAND

Join a guild and you'll be safe forever. Probably

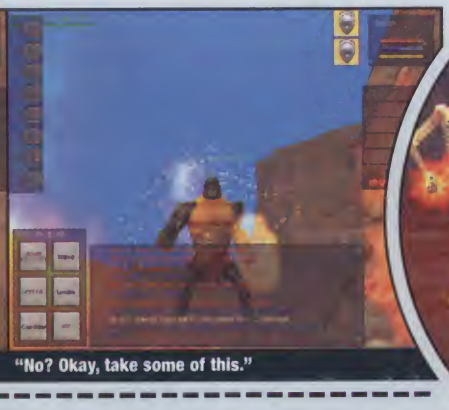
Safety in numbers is the name of the guild-forming game.

There are many player-created guilds in the game. Join one of them and the name of the guild in question will pop up on the top of your head like magic. The major advantage of being in a guild is that you have people to train you in the intricacies of combat skills and equipment management, and of course if you get bullied you have loads of mates to back you up. The major disadvantage is that most of them take themselves very seriously, and expect you to attend meetings and get involved in all guild matters. For me, being in a guild seems more like hard work than fun. I prefer to travel alone and meet up with people when I go into places to fight (it's *very* easy to find people willing to team up with you). But if you're the organised type and need some semblance of order in your virtual life, then guilds are probably the thing for you.

"The first time you come up against a real player in *Ultima Online*, your hands will literally be shaking"

much. Could be time to run...

"Look, can we discuss this?"


"No? Okay, take some of this."

Is this the best-looking RPG ever? Yes, it is.

nervousness and become competent enough at PvP to enjoy it for the exhilarating experience that it is.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Ultima Online is not a linear game, and there's so much to do that you'll never, ever get bored. If combat is your thing, search the land for the best possible weapons you can find for your character. If you're a magic user, find a secluded spot and cast spells till they're coming out of your ears – one of these days you'll eventually reach Master Mage status and be the envy of your friends. Or if you want to make money and buy a house of your own to keep all your stuff in, choose a trade skill and make things to sell to other players. There are people who specialise in all the skills in the game, so if you're not sure how to proceed, talk to them and ask their advice.

A final word of warning: this game took over my life completely for about six months, and although *EverQuest* is currently my online RPG of choice (that will change, for reasons explained in the *EverQuest* review), I'll always return to *Ultima Online* because the player community is so friendly, and there's always something new to try which changes the gameplay experience dramatically. *Ultima Online* is the first truly amazing multiplayer game I have ever played, and I urge you to check it out forthwith – but don't blame me if you lose your life to it.

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS Incredibly deep and involving • It never ends – ever

DOWNERS Dated graphically • No 3D, if you're bothered about it

92 The most rewarding gaming experience you'll ever have

experience points with them when you kill things. It's a safety in numbers approach, and while grouping is a sure way to wait forever for your next level, it goes a long, long way to relieving the tedium of wandering around on your own endlessly killing things in the hope of levelling up.

However, this incredibly boring state of affairs disappears when you get to level 5. By this stage you'll have reasonable equipment and armour, and will be more likely to find more people to group with. But most importantly, you'll be ready to enter one of the game's more communal areas. This is where you'll find a lot of other players, and this is exactly when the game suddenly transforms from being tediously monotonous into something a lot more interesting. It's also at this point you'll start to notice that certain strategies are key to survival in combat. From here on in, things get tough.

> **"The graphics in *EverQuest* are so good that battles are as much fun to watch as they are to take part in"**

DEATH OR DISHONOUR

Combat in *EQ* is far more realistic than in *UO* for obvious reasons: the graphics are superb, you're in a true 3D environment, and all the action is in first-person so you get to see what you're fighting face-to-face. However, from here on, every time you die you lose experience points instead of gaining them, which means if you keep dying it takes you longer to get to the next level. This is not the end of the world, particularly in early levels. If you lose experience, you can get it back fairly quickly by killing, although combat generally doesn't have the same edge as it does in *UO* because you don't stand to lose anything if you die. There is a lot of tension in the battles, and it can be genuinely scary at higher levels when you know that if you die again you'll lose your current level, but it's just not the same without any real personal risk involved. The upside of the combat system is that grouping really comes into its own at higher levels. Join other players and take on things that would be impossible to take on alone.

However, at the end of the day you don't need as much skill to be successful in combat in *EQ*. Unlike *UO*, where knowing which spells to cast at the right time and when to switch to a weapon are crucial to success, and quick thinking is the key to survival, combat in *EverQuest* is fairly run-of-the-mill. Got a sword? Twat whatever's on your case. Got some spells? Cast away until you run out of mana. That's not to say that combat in *EQ* is boring, just that it's no different to what you'd expect if you've ever played a single-player RPG. However, the presentation goes a long way to making up for this. In particular, the visual and aural effects that accompany spell-casting are a joy to behold. And the graphics in *EQ* are so good that battles are as much fun to watch as they are to take part in. Combat is not nail-bitingly tense, but it's very impressive nonetheless.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Well, that's actually my biggest problem with *EverQuest*. It's very obvious where you go from here: you'll be going to fight more and more monsters in order to level up and eventually go to new locations with more difficult monsters. When you get to these new locations, you will then start all over again. Fight, level, fight, level, and so on until eventually you've seen all the locations in the game, and your only choice if you want to experience something new is to start all over again with a new character and travel to all the places you've already seen. Having said that, it will take you a very long time to get around to seeing all the locations and dungeons that *EverQuest* has to offer, and the game's beautiful environment graphics mean that finding a new location is cause for much excitement. But generally, *EverQuest* is a very shallow gameplay experience when compared to something like *Ultima Online*, which has incredible depth and surprises you constantly the more you play it. Don't be put off by this closing comment. *EQ* will be perfect for those of you who a) don't want an enormous phone bill or b) simply don't have the time to devote to building up a strong character (*Ultima Online* is quite a hefty commitment).

So there you have it. These are the facts. The choice, as always, is yours. PCZ

PCZVERDICT

UPPERS • Looks amazing • Massive gameworld

DOWNERS Linear gameplay • Very immature player community

85 Beautiful game in repetitive gameplay shocker

TRAVELOGUE

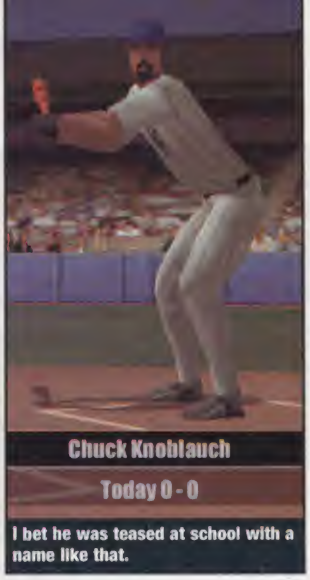
Travelling in *EverQuest* is part of the game's appeal

Damn, missed the boat again.

Getting around in *UO* is fairly easy for most people, as the Gate and Recall spells take you to almost anywhere you want to go. This is not the case in *EQ*, thank God. The world of Norrath (the game world in *EQ*) is fascinating and beautiful, and it would be a real shame to miss it all by zipping from one location to the next. Boat rides are available to take you across large bodies of water, otherwise you're on foot as you go from one place to the next. Some of the locations outside cities are very dangerous, especially for inexperienced players (HighHold Pass springs to mind), and for this reason it's wise to travel with higher level players if you're travelling long distances. The last thing you want is to die halfway through a long journey and then spend an age going back to retrieve your corpse.

It was a close call.

Bat 'em up.



I bet he was teased at school with a name like that.

TRIPLE PLAY BASEBALL 2000

£34.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **SUPPORTS** All major sound and 3D cards **WE SAY** A P200 with 32Mb RAM at least

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Baseball games have always had problems capturing the imagination of the British public. Perhaps it's the copious amount of stats or the over-long seasons (162 games) which put most people off. *TPB2000*, however, attempts to move away from the terrifying over-complication associated with the sport, leaning more towards an arcade feel than pure simulation. There are still plenty of stats to immerse yourself in, and the opportunity to play full 162-game seasons. However, EA have included an option to let the computer generate the results of your games without you having to take a single swing. A nice touch if you don't fancy playing the odd match.

TPB2000 features five modes of play. A single game enables you to take on the computer or a friend at one, three, five or nine innings. You can also play via a network. A season can be anything from 15 to 162 games, which will please both casual fans and die-hard players. There's also an option to take part in the playoffs or a Home Run Challenge. The latter pitches two batters head to head to see how many home runs they can score in the given innings. A nice idea, but invariably irksome and limiting in the long run. Another criticism is that the ball speed doesn't always seem relative to the players', making run-outs all too easy.

Everything in the game can be tweaked, from weather conditions to in-game computer assistance. There are also three difficulty settings, which unfortunately are either a little too hard or a little too easy. The computer can assist in a variety of ways, offering, among other things, fielding, throwing and base-running aids. Graphically the game is excellent, with high-quality sound and commentary. All the major league teams and players are also included. *TPB2000* isn't one for obsessive purists, but it's still another highly polished game from EA for anyone who likes to slog a few home runs.

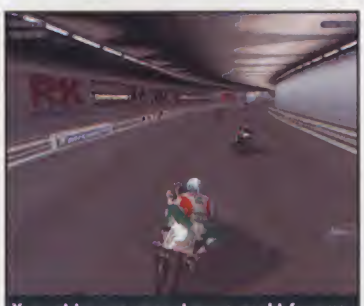
Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT 80%

CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE 2000

£29.99 • Interactive Entertainment • Out now

Breathtaking scenery, but the same attention to detail wasn't given to the bike.


You get to race around some world-famous circuits, such as Monaco.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 24Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** P200 with 32Mb RAM recommended

Let's face it, motorbike games and the PC have never exactly hit it off, with the notable exception of *Superbike World Championship* (*PCZ* #75, 82%). Anyone who already owns last year's *Castrol Honda Superbike World Champions* (*PCZ* #65, 79%), will be left wondering just what the major changes are in this follow- up. Sequels are meant to improve on the original, not just emulate them with a few sections tidied up, and unfortunately the latter is often the case with *CHS2000*.

The game tries to mix both arcade and simulation options via a Realism mode, where different settings, such as damage and tyre wear, can be turned on and off. The manual gives an in-depth explanation of how sprocket sets can change your gear ratios, only for the game to offer you a single bar which must be pushed left or right in order to change the gear lengths. Such indifference to detail soon makes customising the bike more tiresome than engaging, leaving you wondering whether this part of the game was meant to be simulation or arcade. It actually achieves neither.

The game itself features some smart graphics, but the lower resolutions are almost unplayable, with blurred visuals and overly large displays, so you need a good 3D card to get the most out of it. The feel of the bike is realistic, but collisions are poor (you bounce off opponents as though you were both made of rubber). Also, you don't so much fall off the bike as flop off it – there's very little sense of weight to it all. However, the animation is very smooth, the clipping solid and the scenery breathtaking. It's a shame the same detail wasn't paid to the bike's display. Good opponent AI, some great circuits, comprehensive replays, split-screen and network play, championship mode and random weather conditions all add an element of excitement, but overall the experience fails to satisfy. Even the full simulation mode, where damage incurred affects the handling of the bike, doesn't save *CHS2000* from being little more than an average biking game.

Martin Korda

PCZ VERDICT 65%

Groovy, baby. Shagadelic. What the hell is this question about?

AUSTIN POWERS OPERATION: TRIVIA

£24.99 • Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P200 with 32Mb RAM is more like it

When we heard there was an *Austin Powers* game on the way we got understandably excited. Would it be a 3D shoot 'em up where you get to shag lots of beautiful women, naked except for large peace sign pendants, on your way to defeating Dr Evil? An adventure game implementing a new point-and-shag interface where you have to find a hairy chest piece? Or perhaps a not too exciting trivia quiz game where you get to answer some questions? Well, read the title and hazard a guess. As you start up, you're introduced to a contest called Win, Lose or Die which takes place at the Electric Psychedelic Pussycat Swingers Club, but something tells us you shouldn't be able to play live or die games with just one finger.

Comparisons with *You Don't Know Jack* (*PCZ* #57, 91%) are inevitable, but unfavourable to our adorably aging hipster. While *YDKJ* is consistently funny and throws surprises at you every time you play it, *Austin Powers* is repetitive and gets irritating rather quickly. There are two major problems. The first is that a large percentage of the questions are based on slices of American culture that never managed to make it over here – the dregs of '70s TV shows, personalities, toys and cereals that no one on this side of the Atlantic has ever heard of. The second is that the groovy Mike Myers has very little to do with the game – the quiz host has nothing to do with the films, and all the Austin and Dr Evil catchphrases are voiced by another actor.

Unless you've been in a cryogenic sleep since the Sixties, you're unlikely to find much in the way of innovation, even if it is fun for a while. *Austin Powers* is more of an *Operation: Cash-In*. Go capitalism, indeed.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT 55%

How's that for a narrow track? Wait until the loops come.

THRUSTTWIST N' TURN

£29.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** A P233 with 64Mb RAM for a decent frame rate

People who get turned on by the sound of a purring engine and whose idea of fun consists of going round and round in circles pretending to be in a four-wheeled vehicle are spoilt for choice. It seems that every month another batch of driving games race their way on to our monitors, most of them instantly forgotten. Because of this, breathtaking speed and lush landscapes by themselves aren't enough to a lift a title above the rest; it has to do something original or be the very best in their field.

Thrust Twist N' Turn looks, on paper at least, to be a truly original racer. Set in a futuristic world (again), the twist in the tale comes from a unique track design, featuring loops, ramps and layers. In actual fact it's as much fun as *Thrush Tinnitus N' Tuberculosis*. The speedometer and the scenery try to convince you that you're going at 300mph, but the cars chug along like 2CVs going uphill. The one you control feels like a ton of bricks, and even the beginner's vehicle, which is supposed to have maximum manoeuvrability in exchange for less speed, is almost undriveable. There is no subtlety of movement. Your car seems to only go one of three ways: straight, off the road left and off the road right. If you do go straight, you go off the track anyway as soon as you hit a bend. The edge of the road sucks you in like a vacuum – the merest hint of your wheels getting close to it and you're over.

TTNT is definitely more of a *S.C.A.R.S.* (*PCZ* #75, 49%) than a *Rollcage* (*PCZ* #75, 88%), but if you're after a good arcade drive go for the excellent *Midtown Madness* (*PCZ* #79, 90%) instead.

Mark Hill

PCZ VERDICT 42%

A hard-core RPG, yesterday.

SHATTERED LIGHT

£24.99 • Zablac • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor Pentium 166 Memory 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** Pentium II or higher recommended

Leaping on to the *Ultima Online* bandwagon before *Everquest* chases it out of view, this game scores high on ease of installation (it's refreshingly quick and simple), but unfeasibly low on just about everything else.

There are eight pre-determined characters to choose from, such as knight, paladin, wizard etc, but where character creation in certain RPGs can contribute greatly to your enjoyment of the game in *Shattered Light* it's sadly run-of-the-mill and no more than a means to an end.

The game itself also displays obvious (and rather poor) comparisons to *Ultima*. It adopts the same angular view as most RPGs, but the graphics have more in common with the various shareware RPGs floating around the Web than anything you'd expect in a full-priced product.

And it gets worse. The interface has a major (and very frustrating) flaw. Where other games have maps to scroll using a mouse, *Shattered Light* has 'hot spots' which you have to click on to move to the next section. Not only is this pointless and illogical, but they're also not marked – you have to keep clicking on the approximate area of the map until you find the hot spot (which can take minutes, not seconds). Suffice to say *Shattered Light* wouldn't any awards in the Interface Of The Year competition, if there was one.

Combat is also a lacklustre affair. Although the spells are aesthetically pleasing up to a point, they don't cut it compared to leading RPGs such as Origin's *Ultima* series. And even the savegames don't save you in the location they should.

All in all, *Shattered Light* is a pants game with pants graphics and a crap interface. Avoid.

David Stark

PCZ VERDICT 25%

A peaceful scene somewhere in North China.

Reds under the bed? No, this time they're in tanks.

The visual attack plan dialogue is excellent.

NORM KOGER'S OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR, VOLUME II

£34.99 • Empire/Talonsoft • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P166 Memory 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** P200 and 32Mb RAM recommended

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Operational Art Of War Volume I covered 1939-1955, and *Volume II* takes up the story, enabling you to recreate real-life and hypothetical conflicts of the last 40-odd years, from Desert Storm to the projected ground invasion of Kosovo. With 1100 vehicles and weapons in its database, you're spoilt for choice.

Although *TOAW II* might look the same – and the graphics are looking decidedly dated – there are a lot of under-the-bonnet changes to the engine. Accurate armour penetration rules mean that M1 tanks can take on obsolete varieties like T55s and suffer no losses. Air combat has also been tightened up and tied to proficiency for added realism; Stealth bombers and strike aircraft are almost invulnerable in the hands of good crews, despite the very potent SAM threat. Nukes and chemical weapons are horribly well-modelled. Things can get very messy if they're used…

Airmobile movement and assault opens up a whole new avenue of options – watch an airmobile regiment drop on your HQ and expect to pick up lots of pieces. As you'd expect, things have changed over the last half-century, and many more rules have been added to the mix, including precision-guided munitions, night fighting, air refuelling, NBC protection, and electronic warfare. At least you get an option to play standard or advanced rules though, making it more accessible to start with.

New commands have been filtered into the system too, such as advance and garrison orders, and scenario design has been boosted considerably with more conditional events, no-fly zones, exclusion zones, replacement priorities for different types of unit, and multiple objective tracks, so a side can change its strategy based on triggered events.

Volume II is a complex simulation of operational-level command, and to master it you need a lot of practice and a lot of hard work. In return you get a realistic, enjoyable wargame with a scale of between 2.5km and 50km per hex, and from six hours to one week per turn. Put simply, there isn't an ops-level wargame to beat it.

Andrew Wright

PCZ VERDICT 80%

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

£34.99 • Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 266 with 64Mb RAM and 8x CD-ROM drive recommended; a top-quality mouse will also prove very helpful

PCZONE RECOMMENDED

There must surely be a limiting factor to a game where you hit a ball towards a little hole, while taking into account wind direction and terrain. *PGA Championship Golf* begs to differ. Included within it are a host of comprehensive features to satisfy even the most anal of golf fans.

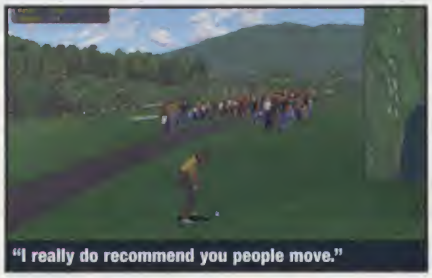
Starting with a preview of the game, FMV clips take you through all the ways in which to execute each type of shot with the mouse. The game features both the mouse-swinging (TrueSwing) control method and a welcome return of the dated but popular three-click system.

In order to master the game, you can use the practice ranges from one of the seven PGA courses available to practice driving, chipping and putting, as well as attempting any of the 18 holes. Once you've mastered your skill shots, it's time to move on to the tournament mode. Choose one of the 12 different types of contest (Match, Medal, Ryder Cup etc), your opponents, weather conditions, rules, ball size, number of holes (among other options), and you're away. If you get bored with the courses provided, there's a course designer so you can have a go at creating your own holes. Another nice feature is the inclusion of Readyplay, which enables you to play simultaneously with your opponents, rather than waiting for each one to take their shot. LAN and Internet play is also available.

The in-game graphics are smooth, if not spectacular, although it's a shame that the crowd are so static; they can also stand right in front of your golfer when he takes a shot, which is a little sloppy. However, *PGACG* is a very solid and engaging game, with more options than the Muller Corner range and adequate ball physics to boot. It's not in the same league as *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* (*PCZ* #69, 93%), but it's still worth a look.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT **82%**



"I really do recommend you people move."

"I'm not playing any more!"

"Own up, which one of you painted stupid squares on the green?"

AMERZONE THE EXPLORER'S LEGACY

£34.99 • Codemasters • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8x CD-ROM drive **WE SAY** A PII and 64Mb RAM, unless you want to wait forever for each screen to refresh

For anyone who remembers *Riven* (*PCZ* #57, 72%), *Amerzone The Explorer's Legacy* will be immediately familiar. The core of the game is to wander around beautifully drawn locations, while picking up objects and using them to solve puzzles via an easily accessible interface. Once they're solved, you can progress to the next part of the game, with the storyline unfolding as you go. It's the kind of slow-moving, thinking man's game that everyone claims to hate, yet which seems to sell millions.

I expected to be bored to within an inch of my life within the first ten minutes. However, before I knew it I was uncovering a potentially intricate plot and some rather intriguing puzzles. The storyline centres around a journalist (that's you) returning an egg to a country called Amerzone. This egg somehow holds the key to the land's prosperity. Your mission is to fix a plane boat and take the egg back to its rightful place. Along the way you meet other characters, and are treated to beautiful cut-scenes as a reward for solving the puzzles.

The first half of the game is compelling, but then unfortunately it all goes wrong. The storyline becomes scrappy and underdeveloped, and the puzzles badly thought-out and annoying. You spend most of your time searching the ground for objects which are hard to see, and walking around for what seems like forever to move from one location to the next. Constant in-game crashes are also a regular feature.

Another problem is that it's all a bit too easy. Even though the game claims to be "ideally suited to non-hard-core games audiences", there's neither enough depth nor enough difficulty to warrant the price. It's all over too quickly, but by the end of it you're glad it is, as it leaves a real sense of anticlimax. Like David Coulthard, *ATEL* starts brilliantly, finishes badly and crashes far too often for comfort.

Martin Korda

PCZVERDICT **60%**

Every now and then you meet someone, and they're not always friendly.

Looking at old furniture is probably more fun than playing *Traitors Gate*.

Camouflaged soldiers in the Tower of London? This can't be right.

TRAITORS GATE

• £39.99 • Zablac • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P100 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** A P166 with 64Mb RAM will do

Here's a storyline to set your pulse racing: a Major has defected from the Pentagon, taking with him classified files on how to rescue priceless treasures in the event of war. You are sent to the Tower of London to protect the British Crown Jewels. To do this you must infiltrate the Tower undetected, bypass an incredibly sophisticated security system, and replace the jewels with fake reproductions before the evil Major gets them. Amazing, isn't it? How a plot like that ever got turned into a game is beyond our comprehension, and if you ever see it in action you'll share our disbelief.

Traitors Gate is a graphic adventure in the style of *Myst* (*PCZ* #15, 67%) and *Journeyman Project 3* (*PCZ* #61, 80%). The adventure is trying to keep your interest alive for more than five minutes. The interface not only takes up half of the screen, it also looks poor and feels unresponsive. The graphics are dated and uninteresting, consisting of a wave of pixels that ripple slightly as you move around, while the gameplay is a combination of childish puzzles and a frustratingly large amount of dying whenever you click on the wrong part of the screen. Someone probably realised that Japanese tourists live on the cutting edge of technology and wouldn't buy this multimedia tour from the Tower of London's souvenir shops, and so decided to stick a game on it.

Not even the fact that there's a James Bond-ish soundtrack and some little gadgets to mess about with can save it. We could complain that the whole story should have been one mission out of many, taking place all over the world. As it is, we can only thank god that they kept it so short.

Mark Hill

PCZVERDICT **29%**

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Cheap and nasty, or cheap and tasty? We browse through the latest budget releases

BUDGET BOY Keith Pullin

More dancing, this time by some salsa crazies.

This could be the budget buy of the year.

Don't worry about the height, it's not real.

UNREAL

£14.99 • GT Interactive/Replay • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P166 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** A hefty PC with a 3Dfx card is what you really need

PC ZONE CLASSIC

When we first reviewed *Unreal* back in that heady summer of '98, it was the year's most spectacular event bar the World Cup opening ceremony. With its engrossing storyline and atmosphere, amazing graphics and imaginative level design, *Unreal* was hard to fault.

Well, a year has passed, and the game remains firmly entrenched in the 'Which is the best first-person shooter?' argument, earnestly exchanging gunfire with the likes of *Quake II*, *Half-Life* and *SiN*. Up against such fierce opposition, *Unreal* falls short in a number of departments. Firstly, the multiplayer deathmatch mode is disappointing. Secondly, enemies have an annoying habit of running away. And thirdly (and most disgracefully), the weapons are puny and unsatisfying.

That said, the single-player game remains one of the most challenging and engrossing around, boasting a massive play area and the added bonus of a built-in level designer. There's even a highly intelligent Botmatch option. So even without multiplayer magnetism to draw you in, single-player excellence ensures unquestionable longevity .At just 15 pounds, *Unreal* is a classic buy and not to be missed.

PCZVERDICT **91%**

DUKE NUKEM 3D

£14.99 • GT Interactive/Replay • Out now

TECH SPECS:

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** You should be fine with that

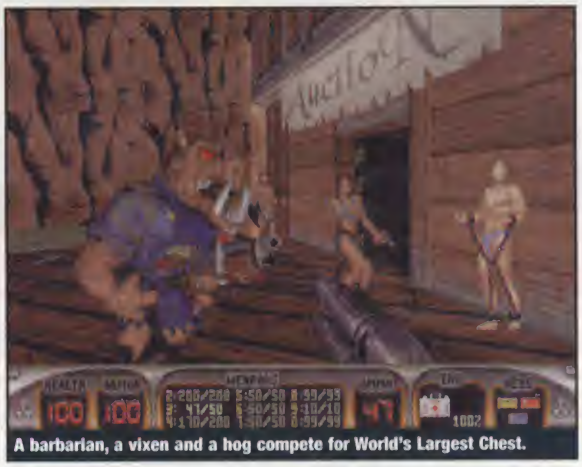
PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Duke Nukem 3D was one of the first games to take the first-person shoot 'em up by the scruff of the neck and inject some balls into it; the 'real world' level design even managed to include a booming strip joint with live dancing girls. There was even swearing. It was a bit risqué back then, and we loved it.

Duke himself is your usual big gun/small brain action hero, although curiously this ultra-stereotypical protagonist possesses a certain amount of amiable personality. *Duke Nukem 3D* is the sort of game you want to complete for *him* rather than for you.

Graphically, *DN3D* looks dated, with no sign of the 3Dfx wonders we now take for granted. And there's no question that the newer graphic engines seen in *Unreal*, *Quake II* and *Thief* make for a smoother ride. However, when two new mission packs (namely *Duke Caribbean* and *Duke Out In DC*) are also bundled into this wholesome 15-quid package, you can forgive the scruffy edges. When it comes to entertainment, this is a whole lot of it.

PCZVERDICT **89%**



A barbarian, a vixen and a hog compete for World's Largest Chest.

"I always wanted to fool around with twins."

Purple Wild Horses, as the Stones didn't sing.

LORDS OF MAGIC

£9.99 • Havas/Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P75 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** SVGA graphics card needed

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Lords Of Magic is a beautifully crafted strategy/RPG that's as enjoyable to play as it is to behold. You begin the game as a warrior, mage or thief, and then embark on various perilous quests with up to 12 NPCs for company. As the game progresses, your character and those around you gain experience by either training, or fighting battles against the usual pointy-eared evil folk that take place in a real-time environment. Movement from one part of Urak to the other is turn-based.

Also nestling snugly into the gameplay is a resource management section that enables you to develop villages, and thus create new heroes and champions to aid the cause. *LOM* is a seriously involving game, and once you manage to master the different game styles a rich fantasy experience awaits. Not a classic, but certainly recommended.

PCZ VERDICT 81%

Propilot 98: a real plane in the neck.

PRO PILOT 98

£14.99 • Havas/Sierra • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P133 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Have a flight stick handy

Four hours of in-flight tutorial with a virtual pilot is enough to drive anybody insane. On the other hand, if you're dead keen to find out about things like aerodynamics, flight procedures, GPSs (that's Global Positioning Systems) and map-reading techniques without leaving the comfort of your chair, then you're probably already falling over yourself to get to the shop to buy this.

With 2500 airports, 100 towns, a dozen or so planes, plus European and American landscapes, *Pro Pilot 98* is an anorak's dream. Unfortunately, for the rest of us it's just a bit too tedious. Spend your money renting out a few air disaster movies instead. Alternatively, hang on until Microsoft release their *Flight Simulator 98* (*PCZ* #55, 94%) on budget. What? Well, it might happen. Microsoft are generous like that.

PCZ VERDICT 70%

Why did the frog cross the road?

Frankly, we couldn't give a toss.

Bizarre, but not particularly interesting.

Just say no, kids.

FROGGER

CD case £9.99/boxed £12.99 • Hasbro/Classic Games • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P100 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Joystick/gamepad recommended

It would be easy to say that for a tenner you can't really go wrong with *Frogger*, but sadly it's not like that – you can go *very* wrong. In fact *Frogger* is so annoying you'll wish the original arcade game had never been created.

This platform update, with its pretty 3D graphics and 35 levels, features power-ups, female frogs, sub-games and much more. Variety and imagination is not the issue. The trouble lies with the irksome control method and appalling collision detection. It's the kind of carelessness we would have accepted blindly back in the old days, but nowadays it's a failing that gradually gnaws away at you until you can't take any more.

Don't succumb to the lure of well-intended nostalgia – avoid this game like you would a speeding juggernaut.

PCZ VERDICT 45%

GLOVER

CD case £9.99/boxed £12.99 • Hasbro/Classic Games • Out now

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM **Processor** P75 **Memory** 16Mb RAM **WE SAY** Joystick/gamepad recommended

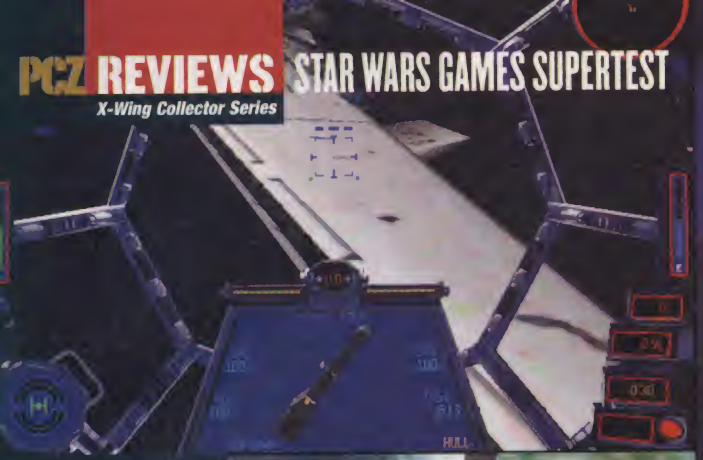
Glover is a punchy little platform game that was probably devised after somebody took some hallucinogenic drug, looked at their hands and realised they could move them into a variety of useful shapes. Yes, this is a game where you control a disembodied hand across 30 levels containing your standard arcade/puzzle fare. As well as performing feats such as balancing on balls and cartwheeling through small gaps, our gloved friend can also curl up into a fist and slam himself into enemies, crushing them like you would a small bug.

There's no denying that *Glover* is bizarre, but at the same time it's not particularly interesting. The standard trudge through the obligatory ice world, water world and space world, flicking switches as you go, hardly constitutes enthralling gameplay.

It would be nice to give *Glover* a big hand; sadly all it gets is the middle finger.

PCZ VERDICT 56%

X-Wing Collector Series



X-Wing Alliance

Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight

The Phantom Menace

Episode One – Racer

PCZ SUPER STAR

With *Star Wars: Episode One* mania currently gripping the entire planet, it seemed a good idea to take a look at all the best *Star Wars* games out there and let you know which we think you should buy. Lightsaber at the ready: *Paul Mallinson*

L to R: Steve Hill's favourite *Star Wars* character is "that bird with pasties on her head". David McCandless has a soft spot for Emperor Palpatine. Mark Hill prefers the common or garden Stormtrooper. Richie Shoemaker's fave is R2D2. Paul Mallinson's is Gran Moff Tarkin (as played by Peter Cushing).

TEST

STAR WARS GAMES

Star Wars, wonderful *Star Wars*. At least, that's what most people seem to think. Since George Lucas struck it lucky with his blockbusting movie back in 1977, the science fiction enigma that is *Star Wars* has swept the entire planet in virtually every guise, form and function known to man. *Star Wars* masks, *Star Wars* pens, *Star Wars* underpants, *Star Wars* figures – you name it, there's probably been a *Star Wars* version of it.

When it comes to games, most of us will have noticed that there have been a fair few *Star Wars*-related titles on the PC over the years, starting with that famous vector-driven classic, *X-Wing*, way back in 1993. Since then, apart from the odd blip, LucasArts – the games division of LucasFilm – have proved again and again that this hugely successful franchise is an ideal setting for all manner of gaming genres. We've seen cockpit shoot 'em ups, first-person shoot 'em ups, strategy games – even a *Star Wars* version of Hasbro's world-famous Monopoly – and it still seems to us that the gaming fraternity just cannot get enough of this ubiquitous fantasy fest. In gaming terms, it could be said that *Star Wars* is nothing short of a licence to print money.

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Obviously, fans of the first trilogy of movies will have already sampled the many delights of these licensed gems, but there remains a percentage of us who have simply missed out. With *Star Wars* mania on the up again, thanks to the release of Lucas' latest celluloid epic, *Episode One: The Phantom Menace*, the *PC ZONE* team thought it high time to round up the best of the bunch. So, with a beer in one hand and a dictaphone in the other, we set out to determine which, out of all the *Star Wars* games available, we think you should invest your time and money in.

X-WING COLLECTOR SERIES

Macca: First impressions are very good – mostly because LucasArts have actually gone out of their way to update these games for 3D cards. Excellent – that's what you want. More companies should do that sort of thing. The first *X-Wing* was a bit dicey, but still exciting, and there are still some memories to be had there. I remember the pilot training being really cool. *TIE Fighter* was a much better game because it got down to the morality, if nothing else. But a lot of early missions in these early *Star Wars* games were bloody dull – I mean, identify this cargo vessel, fly through this sodding hoop, sit and wait for this large destroyer to come, and then piss off again. These first two games weren't as story-driven as some of the later titles, and nowadays would be seen by most people as really boring.

Mallo: What did *X-Wing Alliance* do that *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* didn't?

Macca: It had a really desirable aim, for a start. When you completed all the missions, you got to fly into the Death Star and do the whole *Return Of The Jedi* mission. Also, when you got out of the early bits, which basically trained you up to use the Millennium Falcon, the story kicked in and you instantly felt more involved.

Mallo: That's fair enough, but did you complete *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter* to see what rewards those games dished out?

Macca: No, but I know that in the first game, *X-Wing*, you got to do the Death Star battle run at the end. But the technology at the time was so crappy that it wasn't that convincing.

Mallo: But now, with 3D-accelerated graphics, mightn't *X-Wing* be a tad improved and actually worth taking the time to complete?

Macca: Well, maybe you're right. Maybe I'll play the *Collector Series* right through to the end. But it's unlikely, to be frank.

Mallo: They've done wonders with the graphics, actually. Apart from the weak cut-scenes, you'd be forgiven for thinking these games were new. They've kept the same farty, warbly MIDI music in the cut-scenes as before – it's a bit jarring to come out of the game, which uses John Williams' original score, and then hear this ten-year-old substandard rendition. But I can forgive it that.

> **"LucasArts have gone out of their way to update these games for 3D cards. Excellent"**
>
> MACCA ON *X-WING COLLECTOR SERIES*

Macca: Who cares about the cut-scenes? Are you trying to say that this is one of the first games ever made where the in-game graphics are better than the cut-scenes?

Mallo: *X-Wing* is almost seven years old now.

Macca: It's a great game – we all played it. That's some testament to its popularity.

Mallo: I played both *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* earlier, and it must be said that they're still great games.

Macca: What about *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*? It still doesn't work as a network game…

Mallo: Which is what it was designed for, wasn't it?

Macca: It was rubbish. Who's playing it now? No one.

Mark: I'd buy this now – if I didn't already have the originals. *TIE Fighter* is a game everybody should have if they're interested in *Star Wars* because it's just so brilliant to be able to play on the

Dark Side and just be one of the minions, rather than being a hero who's fighting the whole universe. You're just one little cog in this huge, ominous machine.

Mallo: *TIE Fighter* had more of a sense of scale as well. By comparison, *X-Wing* now seems a little bit empty.

Richie: The thing about *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* is that, technologically, they weren't that great compared to…

Mallo: Come on… At the time, they were cutting-edge.

Richie: I remember when *X-Wing* came out, I wasn't that impressed with it compared to something like *Wing Commander*… was it *II* or *III*? Because there were no textures on any of the ships, they didn't quite capture the feel…

Macca: Use your imagination, man. That's what they used to do in the 'olden days'.

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Macca: What about the original *Star Wars* arcade machine? You weren't sitting there going: "The graphics aren't very good on this."

Richie: Never played it.

Mallo: You never played the original *Star Wars* arcade game?

Richie: Not until about five or six years after it came out, but then *Starstrike* on the ZX Spectrum was better.

Mallo: Sorry, but *Starstrike* was *not* as good as the *Star Wars* arcade machine.

Macca: Even now, *nothing* is better than the old *Star Wars* arcade machine. It's got a magical quality.

Mallo: Do you think they should revamp it?

Macca: No. How many Death Stars can you blow up in one game, for God's sake? What do you reckon, Steve? You've said bugger all up until now.

Steve: They just look like glorified flight sims to me.

Duck!

TIE Fighter: kill the good guys.

Fly any *Star Wars* ship.

Just like the old days.

X-WING COLLECTOR SERIES

Featuring updated Windows 95/98 versions of the original *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*, this new compilation also comes complete with added 3D card support and a 14-mission cut-down version of *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* into the bargain. You can almost hear those *Star Wars* fans spooging.

SCORE	PCZ #73, 80%
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
PUBLISHER	LucasArts
PRICE	£29.99

Join the Alliance today!

X-Wing Alliance: explosive action.

Your dream: to fly the Millennium Falcon.

X-WING ALLIANCE

Playing as a family of neutral traders caught up in the battle between the Rebel Alliance and the Empire, *X-Wing Alliance* combines and updates all the excitement of past *Star Wars* space combat sims into a game that's far more playable and much better looking than those previously encountered.

SCORE	PCZ #77, 88%
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
PUBLISHER	LucasArts
PRICE	£34.99

"Punch it, Chewie!"

Mallo: Well, they are in a way, but this kind of space combat sim has been around for years…
Steve: It's another case of polishing a turd. You wouldn't necessarily play another similar game, but throw in some *Star Wars* and people are going bloody ape over it.
Mallo: That's too harsh, to say that it's merely polishing a turd. They *are* good games.
Macca: Everyone wants to fly sci-fi battles, don't they?
Steve: Speak for yourself.
Macca: I remember Paul Woakes' *Mercenary* as being an excellent example of sci-fi space combat.
Steve: Space combat bollocks.
Macca: At the end of the day, that whole *Collector Series* is totally undermined by *X-Wing Alliance* because you can play as everything in that game. You can fly all the ships, do loads of missions – why bother with the older games? This is probably the final game of this type and they let you fly the Millennium Falcon, and…
Richie: No, there's loads they can do with it still. They're doing this Obi-Wan *Jedi Knight* sequel, prequel or whatever, and there's nothing to stop them doing something along the lines of Han Solo – an *Elite*-style game where you're a trader. You start off in a card game, you win the Millennium Falcon and then it ends up where you actually have to get the plans off Princess Leia, or something. That'd be brilliant.
Macca: What next, the C3PO story, where you're this camp robot mincing round the universe bossing little droids around?
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Macca: *X-Wing Alliance* is the epitome of the space combat sim.
Mallo: There must be plenty of other developers who would love the chance to do a game of this sort. Why don't LucasArts license something out to them?
Macca: LucasFilm and LucasArts' resources will all be pumped into the new movie, so forget the old ones – they're past it.
Mark: There are some new space sims due for release soon that make *X-Wing Alliance* look like the turd.
Macca: That's true, but LucasArts have to be faithful to the *Star Wars* universe.
Steve: Yeah, they are limited in what they can do.
Richie: George Lucas has got to give the green light to pretty much everything.
Macca: Everything's got to have bloody Ewoks in it, hasn't it?

X-WING ALLIANCE

Macca: The best thing about *X-Wing Alliance* is that it follows the back story of the film, so all the stuff that added up to *(puts on a cranky Palpatine-style voice)*: "Many Bothans died to bring us this information" – you get to take part in that whole story, and you get to kill a few Bothans as well. It was good fun.
Mallo: What about that new race of creatures that the game introduces?
Macca: Yeah, during the early part of the game. It's the usual thing – when you play *Star Trek* games, you're always dealing th the 'McKakkans' something, who u've never heard of. d everyone's like: *What?*" because ey're not allowed interfere with the yline. I can't even remember what they were called, but you encounter them early on and they've got funny foreheads and all the usual stuff. As soon as you join the Alliance, though, they quickly die out and are forgotten.
Steve: When is it set? The back story to which film?
Macca: In the first few missions, the characters are talking about Luke Skywalker blowing up Death Stars. You play a family that has heard about the news and eventually you get involved in the Alliance. And then you end up at the end of *Return Of The Jedi*, which is brilliant because you get to fly four missions that are absolutely faithful to the final film in the first trilogy. You know – you even get Admiral Ackbah saying: "It's a trap!" and that sort of stuff.
Mallo: One of the things I liked about *TIE Fighter* was that the whole thing was set just after the Hoth battle in *The Empire Strikes Back*. You're an Imperial pilot chasing the Rebels as they attempt to escape. You're involved in the continuation of the story. While Luke Skywalker is on his way to the Degobah system, you're picking off hapless Rebels in their antiquated spaceships, which is brilliant. As far as *X-Wing Alliance* goes, though, it is an excellent game – I liked the 'random' elements that introduced themselves to the missions as you play through them. Things would happen as you played the mission and your objectives would change. It did add a modicum of unpredictability to the game.
Macca: Sometimes, though, the game got really hard. The control system has swollen over the years and there are loads of controls now. One keyboard overlay just won't do it. There are all kinds of ways of repositioning your energy values and counter-measures and stuff, and it makes the game a lot harder to play. You could say that *X-Wing* is turning into something of a heavyweight flight sim. It's no longer as simple as it used to be.

"I liked the 'random' elements that introduced themselves to the missions"
MALLO ON *X-WING ALLIANCE*

Mallo: It has always been reasonably complex – even since the first *X-Wing*.
Macca: But if you want to succeed, you have to learn all these extra controls, and I can't be arsed. Accelerate, decelerate, shoot – that's all I want.
Mark: I agree – the complexity of the controls put me off. Look at the keyboard reference card that comes with the game…
Macca: It's a four-page booklet with *X-Wing Alliance*!
Mark: In *TIE Fighter*, all you had to use was accelerate, decelerate,

Is this a dagger I see before me?

Kneel at the power of *Jedi Knight*.

Rankhor says: "Buy this game!"

All camp robots should die.

DARK FORCES II: JEDI KNIGHT

Now available as a double pack, complete with the *PC ZONE* Classic mission pack *Mysteries Of The Sith*, *Jedi Knight* is arguably LucasArts' finest hour. You play Kyle Katarn, a mercenary hero from the original *Dark Forces*, who sets out to avenge the death of his father at the hands of seven ruthless Dark Jedi.

SCORE	*PCZ* #74, 90%
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
PUBLISHER	LucasArts
PRICE	£29.99

target, match speed of target, and that's about it – four keys.

Steve: I'm sure you used more than that. What about when you typed your name in at the beginning?

Mark: Piss off.

Mallo: But it's pretty much the same in *X-Wing Alliance*. Sure, there are shitloads of keys to use, but you don't need to use them all the time.

Macca: What I'm saying, though, is that as you get further and the missions become more complex, you have to be able to balance your energy and deal with multiple targets – all that sort of crap – and unless you've got five pairs of hands, you've literally had it within seconds.

Mallo: And it doesn't have the cool video replay option that was so good in *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*. Now you can't even watch yourself being finished off within seconds…

Macca: No, you're right.

Mallo: Yeah, in the first two games, you could replay a battle from any angle, from the point of view of any ship. You could freeze the action, rotate around anything involved and jump into the fray at any point. That was a bloody good feature of the originals and they left it out of *X-Wing Alliance*.

Macca: I'm not really interested in that kind of shit.

Richie: I started playing *X-Wing Alliance*, but it never really grabbed me. I was expecting more of a trading game…

Mallo: *You were what?!*

Richie: Well, you play a trading family, but you don't really do any trading.

Macca: Who wants to bloody trade?

Mallo: Is there room in this world for a *Star Wars* trading game?

Richie: Yes, I think there is.

Macca: Open a shop if you wanna do some trading…

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Mallo: Steve, would you play a *Star Wars* trading game?

Steve: *(Deadpan)* I don't think so, no. What would you trade?

Mallo: And what's the monetary system? Is there one in *Star Wars*?

Richie: I'd trade Ewoks.

Macca: Ewok porn.

Mallo: Ewok slave labour?

Steve: Wookie arse wipe. Special stuff – removes tagnuts.

Richie: Look, there *is* a game in that. You've just summed it up.

Everyone: *(Tears of laughter)*

DARK FORCES II: JEDI KNIGHT

Mallo: *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries Of The Sith*, in one pack – unbelievable bargain, as far as I'm concerned.

Steve: Here we go…

Macca: *(In a northern accent)* "Unbelievable bargain."

Richie: Do you want to sit by yourself, Mallo?

Mallo: Okay, I'm gonna shut up for the moment. Steve, what did you reckon to it?

Steve: I think *Dark Forces* was revolutionary when it came out, but *Jedi Knight* looks moribund.

Mallo: Sorry, but that's absolute horse shit. *Dark Forces* was sub-*Doom*. *Doom* was far better.

Steve: No it wasn't, you could look about and all sorts – and it was *Star Wars*.

Mallo: So what? You could look up and down? It got in the way of the gameplay, if anything. The lack of perspective correction made it look…

> **"One selling point was that you got to use a lightsaber. But it doesn't work as well as you'd expect"**
>
> MARK ON *DARK FORCES II: JEDI KNIGHT*

Steve: Aw, Mallo, *just shut up*! That was about five years ago – no one knew what perspective correction was!

Everyone: *(Riotous laughter)*

Mallo: Can't I have my say?

Steve: No, you've had it!

Everyone: *(More riotous laughter)*

Mallo: Bollocks. *Dark Forces I* was crap. *Jedi Knight* was much, much better.

Steve: For the time, *Dark Forces* was superb.

Mallo: *Dark Forces* felt like *Doom* – it wasn't anything special. You could look up and down – so what? You'd fumble around looking for the 'look up and down' keys and get killed while you were doing it. It was very repetitive…

Macca: So was *Doom*.

Mallo: Yeah, but Doom had better level design, better monsters, better weapons… Anyway, forget *Dark Forces* – what about *Jedi Knight*? It was a much better game – it felt really good to play. What the hell don't you like about it? What have you got against it?

Macca: Not a great deal, but you've been batting on about it for ages. Personally, I really like it, but *Jedi Knight* has its problems – serious problems.

Mallo: Like what?

Macca: All right, level design. In terms of geometry and general 'boxiness', LucasArts did a very bad job of simulating a real world environment. You saw a table – it was like a table a two-year-old would design.

Mallo: How can you say that? The level design in *Jedi Knight* was fantastic.

Macca: The sense of scale in *Jedi Knight* was excellent and I really enjoyed playing it, but the levels in places were really uninspiring – quite boxy and dull.

Mallo: It came out at the same time as *Quake II*, so you're comparing the level design with that?

Macca: No, I'm talking purely on an aesthetic level, regardless of what was around at the time. The third-person perspective idea didn't work very well either…

Mallo: But you can play the entire thing in first-person!

Macca: Okay, calm down. I'm not insulting your girlfriend or anything…

Steve: That's another tape in itself.

Macca: The characters were a bit spindly, which irritated me. And the opponents were quite dumb – they often fell off buildings and stuff.

Mallo: Not in the version I played.

Macca: I like the game, though. The Force powers were a bit flawed, especially the system for managing them. All you'd end up using was the Force jump, and possibly the 'choke'.

Mallo: You mean Force grip.

Macca: And the big battles at the end, when you take on the Jedi masters, were simply a case of thrashing. There was no real skill involved.

Mallo: Ah, now that's one aspect of the game I *didn't* like – the lightsaber battles. They were too easy to lose through cack-handedness.

Macca: And I couldn't get that deflect power to work very well.

Mallo: But it worked

automatically. You just stood there with your lightsaber out and your character would hit the laser beams back as the baddies fired at you. But LucasArts cured that problem in *Mysteries Of The Sith* – you weren't forced into a lightsaber battle every ten minutes, only two or three times during the whole game. It worked much better. In fact, *Sith* improved on many different features of *Jedi Knight* – the coloured lighting, level design, character interaction…

Mark: When I first played *Jedi Knight*, it reminded me of *Dark Forces* – a game I've played all the way through – and I was a bit disappointed with the way it looked. Also, one of the biggest selling points at the time was that you got to use a lightsaber. But, like you say, it doesn't work as well as you'd expect.

Richie: The great thing about *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries Of The Sith* is that they're the only *Star Wars* games that take the story away from the trilogy. In fact, *Mysteries Of The Sith* helps set up the story for *The Phantom Menace*.

Mallo: Does it?

Richie: Yeah. I've only just realised that.

Steve: You've wasted your life…

Richie: It sets up the whole *Sith* thing, which comes about in *Episode One*. The Sith is the faction that was established before the Dark Side of the Force came about. You'll find out when you see the new film. With all this *Star Wars* hype, if I were to go home now and play a first-person game, I'd pick *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries Of The Sith* because they're *Star Wars* and they are relevant to the new film.

Mallo: What about Macca's criticisms?

Richie: There's nothing wrong with the game, really. I think the Force powers are really good, like pulling the weapons out of the Stormtroopers' hands.

Macca: Name five of the Force powers.

Richie: Erm…

Mallo: Force jump, pull, grip, lightning… Erm…

Macca: So you only used four of them?

Mallo: No, I used all of them. *Mysteries Of The Sith* actually makes you use different Force powers as you progress. In fact, in the last few levels of the game, your conventional weapons stop working and all you're left with are your Force powers and your lightsaber. Going back to Macca's point about the management system being flawed, I disagree. I found it quite intuitive.

Macca: I like the big monsters that you get from time to time. Suddenly, you get some f**king big creature coming out of the dark at you…

Mallo: Like the Rankhor from *Return Of The Jedi*.

Macca: And there were some quite good weapons in it, too.

Mallo: The level design in *Mysteries Of The Sith* was brilliant. There's a huge sense of scale, intricate detail, very scary bottomless pits… Steve, you're being very quiet today. Have you played either of these games?

> **"It follows the film's storyline exactly… If I hadn't seen the film, I wouldn't buy the game"**
>
> RICHIE ON *THE PHANTOM MENACE*

Steve: *(Deadpan)* 'Ave I 'eck.

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Steve: No, I've played the odd demo and just found it uninspiring.

Mallo: You love your first-person shooters, though.

Steve: It all seems a bit grey and bland and tinny.

Macca: It wasn't that great a network game, either.

Richie: It was – me and Mallo played it quite a bit and we had a laugh. But no one would play it with us.

Steve: You don't have to encourage people to play *Quake* – everyone's played it.

Richie: Well, at the moment, no one else is playing *Team Fortress Classic* apart from me, which means I have to play it online because no one will give me a game.

Mallo: I played it with you.

Richie ***(To Macca)***: You just play *Quake III* because *Quake* is all you wanna play. You know no better.

THE PHANTOM MENACE

Steve: Shocker. The whole thing's displayed at a really awkward angle – it's like *Tomb Raider* meets *Gauntlet*. I tried playing it for a while but just found myself wanting to level out the view so that I could see what I was doing. All you can see is the top of some chimp's head.

Mallo: I'll admit that all I've seen of the game is over Richie's shoulder. Firstly, because I'd rather see the film before playing it, and secondly because I've got better things to be spending my time on at the moment than playing this poor excuse for a game. Can you change the viewpoint?

Richie: You can use cheats to enable a top-down, *Gauntlet*-style view or a third-person view, but they don't really work very well.

Mallo: Richie, you've played it the most because you've seen the film. Everyone else here is trying to avoid playing it because it gives the story away.

Steve: I played it for half an hour and found it tedious.

Mark: I've been avoiding it. I walked out of the room when Richie started playing it.

Steve: Well, what happens is…

Everyone: *(Laughs)*

Macca: It's the worst title for a film of all time. It's rubbish.

Richie: The thing about *The Phantom Menace* is that it follows the storyline of the film exactly. If I hadn't seen the film, I wouldn't buy the game, and if it wasn't *Star Wars*, I wouldn't buy it, so you have to see the film first – otherwise, it's gonna ruin everything.

Steve: I saw some black queen running about, screeching. Is that what the film's about?

Richie: No.

Mark: It's ridiculous. Over here, they're releasing the comic, the book, the soundtrack and the game more than a month before the film comes out.

Richie: It's a strange move. The game follows the film completely and it kind of stretches it out far too much – and, as Steve says, you've got this weird perspective that doesn't help.

Mallo: It's supposed to be an adventure, isn't it? There didn't seem to be much chat in it.

Richie: There isn't, really. Someone might come up to you and say: "Can you help me?" You get a choice of answers, such as yes, no and maybe, but in the end you have to say yes, otherwise you can't continue. The adventure element is practically non-existent – there's nothing to it. It's just an out-and-out arcade game.

Mallo: Graphically, it looks good, but there doesn't seem to have been much of a progression from what we've already seen in games such as *Jedi Knight*. The polygonal characters themselves are nothing special.

THE PHANTOM MENACE

Taking control of Obi-Wan Kenobi, Qui-Gon Jinn, Queen Amidala and Captain Panaka, this arcade adventure faithfully recreates the story from the new film in 3D card-only glory. Rather perversely, LucasArts decided to release the game before the film over here in the UK.

SCORE	PCZ #79, 78%
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
PUBLISHER	LucasArts
PRICE	£34.99

One hope? Two chances.

Glorified *Gauntlet*?

…Or a rich and wonderful adventure?

A NEW HOPE

There are more *Star Wars* games on the horizon. Will they be any good?

More 'classic' *Star Wars* to come...

Force Commander: Lucas' real-time strategy entry.

At the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, LucasArts unveiled plans for a follow-up to classic first-person shooter *Jedi Knight*. Currently going by the working title of *Obi-Wan*, this 3D-only action game will be based on the new *Star Wars* movie and, it is hoped, will go down the same route as genre benchmarks *Half-Life* and *SiN* – in other words, you fight your way through an intricately scripted storyline within a hugely detailed and densely populated *Star Wars*-related environment. As you've probably already guessed, details are presently thin on the ground and nothing has yet been seen of the game. However, we at *PC ZONE* are confident that *Obi-Wan* will live up to expectations and will be more than a mere PlayStation port.

As for other upcoming *Star Wars* titles, LucasArts' entry into the real-time strategy genre, *Force Commander*, is still on schedule for release in November. And even though early sneak peeks have shown the game in a less than favourable light, there's still time for the developers to tidy up the graphics and get everything working okay. So we live in hope.

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

Not every *Star Wars* game has been awarded a *PC ZONE* Classic...

Does anyone remember *Yoda Stories* (*PCZ* #51, 79%)? No, thought not. Released by LucasArts in 1997, this so-called 'desktop adventure' chronicled Luke Skywalker's adventures as he trained to become a Jedi Knight under Yoda and battle the evil Galactic Empire. It was primarily designed to cater for those who had time to burn during their lunch hour (it was very simple and looked terrible), mixing puzzles with Gameboy-style overhead action. Needless to say, it swiftly disappeared.

When *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* (*PCZ* #52, 89%) came out in 1997, it did very well critically but, over time, we discovered that it had many faults and had been drastically overrated – especially as a network game. That's why we felt justified in excluding it from this round-up. The same goes for *Star Wars Supremacy* (1998, *PCZ* #64, 68%), *Shadows Of The Empire* (1997, *PCZ* #56, 88%) and *Rogue Squadron* (1999, *PCZ* #73, 77%).

Other *Star Wars* games that we considered too old and crusty for the purposes of this *PC ZONE* Supertest were *Rebel Assault* (1993, *PCZ* #11, 93%), *Dark Forces* (1995, *PCZ* #24, 95%) and *Rebel Assault II* (1995, *PCZ* #34, 90%), all of which have since been superseded by bigger and better LucasArts titles.

Rogue Squadron: pretty, but shallow.

Dark Forces: classic.

Star Wars, wonderful *Star Wars*...

Richie: Close-up, it does look a bit weak.
Macca: Does it do anything particularly well?
Richie: The animation's quite good – the movement of the characters, and the droids look really good. Everything's accurately recreated from the film, especially the tanks, which look great. Jar Jar Binks is in there as well.
Macca: So nothing innovative?
Richie: It's just a PlayStation game that's been ported to the PC, except that it looks a little bit better running under 3D acceleration. There are only a couple of Force powers and only a couple of weapons. There are no multiplayer features, either.
Macca: That's a bit of a disturbing precedent, isn't it – develop a PlayStation game, then port it to the PC?
Richie: They obviously wanted a simultaneous all-formats release.
Mallo: It smacks of a cynical marketing exercise.

Richie: It is.
Macca: That's outrageous.
Mark: It'll sell, regardless.
Richie: The thing is, I really liked *The Phantom Menace* – the film...
Steve: I should hope so, pissing your money away on trips to New York to see it.
Richie: ...And I'm not gonna be able to see the video for some time, so the next best thing is to play *The Phantom Menace*.
Macca: I see a lot of films, but I don't wanna play videogame versions of them afterwards. *Schindler's List*, the videogame?
Richie: It's not really the dialogue... it doesn't use the original actors from the film, which is a bit of a pisser.
Steve: Why not?! It's just a glorified trailer for the film, as far as I can see.
Mallo: Hold on – if George Lucas reads this, are we in danger of being put to death by his spies?
Macca: But seriously, they've been working on this for ages and ages. They could've come up with something really good, something innovative and interesting.
Mallo: It's a pity. They haven't done this with any other *Star Wars* games in the past.
Steve: So how did you rate it, Richie?
Richie: I'm enjoying playing it because it's *Star Wars*.
Steve: Would you buy a turd in a box if it had *Star Wars* written on it?
Richie: Yes.
Steve: *(Laughs)* Well, as I said, you've wasted your life.
Richie: The point is that *The Phantom Menace* may not be the best *Star Wars* film or game there is, but it sets up the storyline brilliantly for the next two films. You come out of the cinema second-guessing what the next film will be, and how it's gonna tie in with the existing trilogy, and you just want to relive that experience. And, apart from reading the book, I suppose...
Steve: Or growing up.
Richie: ...Playing *The Phantom Menace* game is about the best way to do that.

"Didn't you know? The actual ship is just two rockets held together with a bit of wire"

STEVE ON *EPISODE ONE – RACER*

EPISODE ONE – RACER

Mark: This is basically *Pod (Old Ubi Soft race game – Ed)* with *Episode One* graphics.
Richie: It's basically *WipEout* in the *Star Wars* universe.
Steve: Any fool can look at it and say that it's *WipEout*... Sorry, carry on then...
Richie: It doesn't matter how many vehicles there are in the game because the only one you're gonna want to play is Anakin Skywalker's craft.
Steve: I've met Anakin Skywalker.
Richie: Did he turn you to the Dark Side?
Steve: He's a precocious little shit...
Everyone: *(Laughs)*
Mallo: *(Sighs)* It's all good copy...
Macca: Is this another PlayStation port?
Richie: Yeah, it is.
Steve: Is it? I played it on the N64 – it was all right.
Richie: It's a very simple game. Mass market. You can upgrade your vehicles, take part in a tournament, win lots of money, upgrade your vehicle again, blah, blah, blah, win again, open up some new tracks, etcetera. It's got these tracks that are

Racer: Blisteringly fast.

EPISODE ONE – RACER

This new racing game, which is based on a scene from the new movie, pits 600mph 'podracers' against each other, with over 20 opponents available to test your skills. The game comes with 20 tracks, spread over eight different worlds. And, being 3D accelerator-only, it's very, very nippy.

SCORE	PCZ #79, 74%
DEVELOPER	LucasArts
PUBLISHER	LucasArts
PRICE	£34.99

The best racer ever?

Looks a bit like *WipEout*.

based on planets that aren't even in the film.

Steve: You mean they made something up? Hang on – the whole thing's bloody fiction… So what?

Richie: It's got a couple of bits from the film that are quite nice, like when you're racing around and you get shot by the Tusken Raiders.

Steve: There are no weapons in it, though.

Richie: It mostly consists of people barging each other out of the way, like in *Ben Hur*. But the game's so fast that you don't get time to do all that crap with weapons. You can nudge people into the sides to damage them.

Mallo: It's better that way – adding weapons would only have diluted the racing action. I hate racing games with weapons that you can't switch off.

Richie: I like the fact that if you want to repair your ship, you have to turn your engines off and glide along while they're being fixed.

Steve: The actual ship is just two rockets held together with a bit of wire. I heard some spod recently going on about the guy who invented it, how he got himself some roller skates and two dogs, and got them to pull him along the street just to model what this vehicle is supposed to be like. He seemed to think it was interesting…

Macca: I was just thinking, some marketing dude is like *(puts on squeaky American voice)*: "Okay, so whadda we got in this film? We got a race sequence. Let's do a racing game!" And they just reel one out.

Mallo: Why not, though? At least it seems a better game than *The Phantom Menace*.

Macca: But why? Why not try something more interesting? As I said earlier, they've had so long to prepare for this… About two years ago I was over at LucasArts and got talking to this guy – can't remember his name – and he told me that they were preparing for the new films. I was like: "Wow! Cool!" And all they can come up with is a run-of-the-mill racer and a substandard action adventure.

Mallo: Is it run-of-the-mill?

Richie: It would be run-of-the-mill if it wasn't *Star Wars*.

Macca: We should be able to see through that sort of thing.

Richie: But it's got the atmosphere of the film, and it's faithful to the scenes on which it's based.

Mallo: How do you think it compares to *Breakneck* and *Rollcage*?

Richie: *Rollcage* is far better. I suppose *Breakneck* is as well – you've got far more options – but it's the fact that it's *Star Wars*.

Mark: In this game, when you go past someone, they shout at you, so you do get the feeling that you're racing against other creatures and not just AI-controlled machines. It's fun for a while, like most racing games, but I did find it more fun than a car racing game.

Steve: There's quite a lot of weaving through rocks.

Richie: The tracks are well designed.

Steve: It's a half-decent game.

Mallo: I suppose that's as high a recommendation as we're going to get from you, Steve.

Steve: It is.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Seen the film, now want the game? Before you go and buy the first *Star Wars* game you see, read this to find out which we think is the best of its type…

Choosing a winner, as always, wasn't easy. But dismissing the two latest titles in the ever-expanding *Star Wars* gaming universe as 'losers' was as easy as pie. *The Phantom Menace* was, in Macca's opinion, an "offence to all PC owners". Steve Hill was less kind, describing the game as "mass-market shit for Muppets". No one else, bar Richie (who still maintains that it's not that bad, despite the fact that it's a console port and has no multiplayer facilities), disagreed with Steve.

It was thought that although the *X-Wing Collector Series* was an excellent package in its own right, and that *X-Wing Alliance* rocked pretty big bells, they were too complex for their own good and wouldn't appeal to everyone. Which left us with a clear winner: *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight*.

Despite the discord vented during our initial discussions, voting proved unanimous. Richie described it as having "the best storyline, best pace and best level design" of any of the *Star Wars* titles reviewed here. "It's the only *Star Wars* game that has taken up more than an unhealthy amount of my time," he added. Mallo couldn't recommend the game highly enough (obviously), and Macca and Mark, when push came to shove, also found themselves agreeing. Steve, as usual, remained the only voice of dissent. "I'll take your word for it – although, in principle, I disagree," was his final comment.

So there you go. If you love *Star Wars* and want to partake in the seemingly endless battle between the Rebel Alliance and the Empire, we heartily recommend you go out and buy the *Jedi Knight* and *Mysteries Of The Sith* double pack. You won't be disappointed.

Jedi Knight: wonderful escapism.

FEEDBACK

Our review of *TA Kingdoms* is the main discussion point this month. Keeping the situation totally under control: *Keith Pullin*

Hidden & Dangerous: "Wicked, kick-ass and damn difficult."

IT'S YOUR SHOUT!

Feedback is here to offer you, the player, a platform to voice your opinions on any of the games reviewed in *PC ZONE* over the last few months. Whether you want to sing a game's praises or simply give it a verbal beating, we want to hear from you. Remember to keep your comments between 50 and 150 words and include your name, address and age.

WRITE TO Feedback, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL Alternatively, email them to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with **'Feedback'** in the subject line.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

REVIEWED Issue 78, July
SCORE 94%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"Each unit is animated like nothing else you've ever seen. Archers reload before firing, and the cannoneer covers his ears each time the gun goes off."**

What you think

"This truly is a great game. Well done to Cavedog for doing to *WarCraft 2* what they did to *C&C*. As you said in your review, *TA Kingdoms* does take some time to get into after *Total Annihilation*, but once you're into it, you realise how much better *Kingdoms* actually is."

Grant Bolton

TA Kingdoms: a "triumph of style over substance"? Surely not!

"Just what sort of übersystem did you test *TA Kingdoms* on? Even on my 400MHz PII it grinds along to the point of being unplayable in 800x600, pausing every so often while it accesses the CD, and no amount of option tweaking or reinstalling seems to make it better.

"My advice is if you have £30 burning a hole in your pocket, go and buy the original with the various add-ons and save yourself a lot of frustration."

Jon Morley

"Even though *Kingdoms* eats your processor for lunch (I have a PII 400MHz with 128Mb of RAM), it still runs fairly well and is thoroughly enjoyable. The races are evenly balanced and network play is top-notch. I can see *Kingdoms* becoming the king of RTS."

Anon

"The strategy game of the year? Rubbish! More like the most bugged game ever. My advice? Take it back and get *Dungeon Keeper II*, the most amazing game I've played since *Warzone 2100*."

Keith Robertson

"Having never played *TA* and having read your review of *TA Kingdoms*, I bought this game on its release date. Well, all I can say is *Kingdoms* is a triumph of style over substance, and your review should have reflected this fact. How about sending me £10 for my inconvenience?"

Dominic Jefferies

Comment

There's nothing like a difference of opinion. We ran our versions on nothing more than a P2 450 and experienced none of the major problems that seem to be occurring. However, if you have encountered severe slow-down and other problems, keep an eye on Cavedog's website for patches.

As for Mr Jefferies' claim that the game suffers from a lack of substance, we would suggest he gives it a bit more time, especially as he hasn't played *TA* before. And no, you can't have a tenner.

> **"The strategy game of the year? Rubbish! More like the most bugged game ever. My advice? Take it back and get *Dungeon Keeper II*"**
>
> KEITH ROBERTSON GETS STUCK INTO *TA: KINGDOMS*

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 - THE PHANTOM MENACE

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 78%

What we thought

"Put simply, *The Phantom Menace* is an action game with a smattering of dialogue."

Phantom Menace: *Expendable* with a *Star Wars* plot?

What you think

"*The Phantom Menace* will hit the top of the charts for a few weeks and then drop down when people become aware of the truth. Overall, it's fun for the first few hours, but soon becomes tiresome and disappointing (especially for £35). A game that had so much more potential..."

Anon

"*The Phantom Menace* is worth more than 78 per cent. It's basically *Expendable* with a *Star Wars* plot. If you enjoy non-stop action games, buy it now."

Matthew Hodge

Comment

You said it, Matthew – *Expendable* (*PCZ* #76, 79%) with a *Star Wars* plot. Need we say more?

STAR WARS: EPISODE - 1 RACER

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 74%

What we thought

"*Episode 1 – Racer* is mostly icing with hardly any cake underneath, and in that respect it feels like a superficial marketing exercise."

Episode 1 – Racer: here's the icing, but where's the cake?

What you think

"I think you underrated *Star Wars: Episode 1 – Racer*. The game is ace and is unlike anything else, really. The physics engine is just about right and the sense of speed is excellent."

Ian Dunning

Comment

Actually, it's like a lot of other games, such as *Rollcage* and *WipEout*. It's also very repetitive. So don't be ridiculous – we were bang-on with that review, but your thoughts are always welcome.

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 91%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"All the gameplay elements work pretty well, from the complexity of the planning screens to the levels of your soldiers' AI."**

What you think

"The first mission is tense and really sucks you in. Then disaster strikes. In mission two, soldiers hover three inches above the ground when crawling and struggle to climb down ladders. Furthermore, I have yet to encounter the slightest hint of AI. When leaving soldiers to watch areas of the map, they like nothing more than spinning around on their bellies, or fleeing into the path of enemy fire.

"These problems make what should be an excellent game really rather annoying and unplayable. I guess it's just another case of countless patches to get it right."

Duncan Wardle

"Your *Hidden & Dangerous* review was absolutely spot-on. It's a wicked, kick-ass game, but it's damn difficult, too."

Periro D

Comment

Strange – the only problem we've come across is untidy clipping. Are you sure you're not playing the demo version, Mr Wardle?

Hidden & Dangerous: anyone for a spot of belly-spinning?

ALPHA CENTAURI

REVIEWED Issue 74, March
SCORE 92%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"*Alpha Centauri* is *Civilization* all over again, with the same 'I'll be up to bed later, Dear' gameplay."**

What you think

✪ "Everyone is going on about the 3D perspective of *Warzone 2100* and the upcoming *Tiberian Sun*, but in strategy games it's the gameplay that counts, and *Alpha Centauri* rules. The sheer variety of ways to win makes it one of the best and most replayable games ever. How Paul Edwards (Feedback, *PCZ* #78) could say it was repetitive I don't know."

Tim Silman

✪ "I agree with Mr Edwards' comments regarding *Alpha Centauri*. Unless you've completely lost touch with reality, there's no way this game can be deemed as worthwhile entertainment. I snored my way to victory each time I played, and now it's gathering dust."

Vic Victor

Comment

The simple fact of the matter is that *Alpha Centauri* is for hard-core strategists who like to spend a bit of time on a game and are willing to explore all options and angles. If you're not that type of person, you won't gain maximum enjoyment. Simple.

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

REVIEWED Issue 76, May
SCORE 91%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"It's tense, challenging, frightening and, above all, different. I defy anyone not to enjoy its simplicity and revel in its moments of terror. It's a scream."**

What you think

✪ "James Booth (Feedback, *PCZ* #79) doesn't know anything about gaming. How can he say a game deserves a higher mark without playing the full release? I have both the demo and full version and think the full game is actually not as good as the demo. Why? The lack of a save option.

"Saving is not cheating in any way or form. It is, in fact, essential for a large game such as this. With more than 40 levels, completing the game without saving would take more than a day."

Glenn Wakeford

✪ "I loved both the *Alien* and *Predator* movies and I love this game. Single-player is fun, but multiplayer is excellent. Thank you, Fox Interactive."

Sam Veness

Comment

The lack of a save option is a shame. But come on, Glenn, you just have to bite the bullet and get on with things. Don't be such a wuss.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3

REVIEWED Issue 73, February
SCORE 93%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"The sheer scale of this game and the attention to detail lifts *CM3* high above all other footie management games."**

What you think

✪ "I saw *CM3* getting a bashing in the last issue, so I am sending my own two penn'orth. Since I installed the new patch, *CM3* is the best management game, bar none. All the options we asked for are in, and it's so addictive it's untrue! People who slag it off clearly have not got into its sheer depth yet. My advice is to persevere, because it's worth it. Brilliant game."

David Wilson

***Dungeon Keeper II*: an emphatic thumbs-up all round.**

Comment

That's the end of the *CM3* debate for now. After the recent patches, the general consensus is that *CM3* is truly the best footie management game around. When some new management games appear, we can reopen the case...

DUNGEON KEEPER II

REVIEWED Issue 79, August
SCORE 94%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"The animation rocks great big polygonal bells throughout – check out the crawling salamander monster, for instance."**

What you think

✪ "What a day! For once, we're presented with a game that doesn't try to copy anything else (except maybe its predecessor). It has everything – great graphics, fantastic sound, perfectly honed gameplay and a sense of humour. If you buy only one game this year, make it this one – it's truly amazing."

Matthew Hodge

✪ "I never really had high hopes for *Dungeon Keeper II*, what with the departure of Peter Molyneux and everything, but I have to say the boys (and girls?) at Bullfrog have created what is probably the most original game of the year so far. It's engrossing, action-packed, amusing and basically everything you could possibly want in an entertainment package.

"Long live post-Molyneux Bullfrog. They're better off without him."

Angel Stone

✪ "I play it, my dad plays it, my sister plays it, and the dog is sniffing around for a go too. *Dungeon Keeper II* is a remarkable achievement. Game of the year."

The Browns

Comment

What? You mean you actually agree with Charlie? Indeed this is a historic day.

STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

REVIEWED Issue 78, July
SCORE 90%

What we thought

PC ZONE CLASSIC **"*Birth Of The Federation* combines a mixture of war, diplomacy, spying, resource management and research. How much time you spend on each is up to you, but you won't get anywhere unless you strike a successful balance."**

What you think

✪ "*Birth Of The Federation* is the best PC strategy game I own! It's so addictive – I've played it longer than both *Settlers III* and *Alpha Centauri* combined. The AI is superb and as long as you have enough ships, the battles can be pretty cool as well. It does take a while to get into, but after that it'll blow you away with its depth."

Ann Booth

✪ "It was interesting to read your review of *Birth Of The Federation*, but after some discussion in our house we decided you rated it too highly. Not only is it slow, it's also boring."

Ben Moxon

Comment

Once again, it's clearly a matter of taste. Those who are into both *Star Trek* and turn-based strategy games will be in their element. Those who have a passing interest in one or the other will not be so enthralled. PCZ

***Aliens Vs Predator*: lack of a save option means you play till you drop.**

***Dungeon Keeper II*: even the dog plays it. Well, almost.**

***Birth Of The Federation*: you have to love either *ST* or strategy games.**

UK PC GAMES CHAMPIONSHIPS 1999

OVER £50,000 WORTH OF PRIZES UP FOR GRABS IN TOTAL!

DO YOU RECKON YOU AND YOUR MATES HAVE WHAT IT TAKES to put together a team that can beat all-comers to become the UK PC Games Champions 1999? Dennis Publishing and The Playing Fields have joined forces with AMD and Microsoft to launch the search for the cream of computer games players – and it could be your team that carries off the £10,000 cash prize, not to mention a top-flight gaming PC each... See opposite for the full low-down on the prizes on offer, or visit the Official UK Games Championships website at www.ukpcgc.com.

The event is designed to test the PC game-playing skills of teams of between two and four players who will compete using the latest PC technology, powered by AMD's K6®-III Processors with 3DNow!(TM) Technology and Microsoft's award-winning gaming hardware.

Teams will also be able to make use of Microsoft's MSN Gaming Zone UK to practice their skills online, find team partners and follow the event itself. Visit AMD at www.3dnow.de/gaming_uk2/ and MSN at zone.msn.co.uk/competition for further details.

Five Regional Qualifiers (London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Cardiff and Manchester) will be held between June and August 1999 (run by The Playing Fields), each of which will see 36 teams compete for the right to progress to the Grand Final in London on September 18. The Grand Final will be held at The Playing Fields in London's West End, where there will also be an all-comers Drop-in qualifier during July and August. See opposite for details on the Regional and Drop-in Qualifiers, or visit the official website at www.ukpcgc.com.

THE GAMES

Teams will have to compete in four different gaming genres, playing eight games in all – two from each genre. The teams will designate players to play each of the eight games as they choose.

The Gaming Categories

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Unreal, Quake II

REAL-TIME STRATEGY
Age Of Empires, Total Annihilation

DRIVING GAMES
Motocross Madness,
Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit

SPORTS GAMES
Actua Soccer 3, Jimmy White's 2: Cueball

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THE QUALIFIERS

Check the list below to find the Regional Qualifier closest to your location.

WHAT IS THE DROP-IN QUALIFIER?

The Drop-in qualifier is intended to allow teams who are unable to enter a Regional Qualifier the opportunity to participate in the Championships. Teams can turn up at The Playing Fields to compete on the same basis as the other Qualifiers. The Drop-in qualifier runs from 5th July to 29th August and is available during The Playing Fields, opening hours (Monday to Saturday, 12 noon to 11pm). Teams wishing to compete must arrive before 6.30pm to allow enough time. The Drop-In costs £20 to enter, and unlike the other Qualifiers, we are unable to refund this entry fee.

HOW TO ENTER

Send the coupon (or a photocopy) with a cheque for £20 (refunded on arrival at your Qualifier, except the Drop-in Qualifier, for which no refunds will be given) and you're in the running – on a first come, first served basis, with preference given to teams of four as entries are limited. Your cheque will not be cashed until your entry is accepted and a rule pack sent to you. All team members must be UK residents aged 15 or above. Employees of, or freelancers associated with, Dennis Publishing, The Playing Fields, Microsoft or AMD are ineligible for entry. Entrants accepted will be sent a full rule pack. If you wish to read these before entering, send an SAE to The Playing Fields (address below) or log on to the website (www.ukpcgc.com).

THE PRIZES

£1500 cash prize to each of the six winning Qualifier teams. Plus, the highest scorers in each of the eight individual games at each of the Qualifiers around the country will win a prize from the game's publisher worth at least £100. The highest scorers from the entire Championships in each of the eight games will each be presented with a prize from the game's publisher worth at least £2500! Third place in the final: a top-of-the-range 2D/3D graphics card. Second place: £1000 cash for the team and a top-quality monitor for each team member. The winners will walk away with the £10,000 cash prize and a top-spec PC for each member (worth around £2000 at current prices).

The Regional Qualifiers

ALL ENTRANTS RECEIVE FREE MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE

DATE OF QUALIFIER	LOCATION	CLOSING DATE
5 – 6 Jun 1999	London, The Playing Fields	25 May 1999
12 – 13 Jun 1999	Birmingham, Forte Posthouse	1 June 1999
3 – 4 Jul 1999	Cardiff, Welsh Institute of Sport	25 June 1999
10 – 11 Jul 1999	Glasgow, Marriott Hotel	2 July 1999
7 – 8 Aug 1999	Manchester, Renaissance Hotel	30 July 1999
5 Jul – 29 Aug 1999	Drop-In Qualifier at The Playing Fields	N/A

- Teams unable to attend any other Regional Qualifier can 'drop in' to The Playing Fields in London between the indicated dates and compete on the spot. No refunds of the £20 entry fee are applicable in this case.
- All teams entering must be able to provide at least two of its members to attend the Grand Final, which will take place at The Playing Fields in London on 18 September 1999.

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UKPCGAMESCHAMPIONSHIPS1999

Team name | Team Captain's name and age

Other team members' names and ages

Captain's address | Postcode

Captain's daytime phone | Captain's email address

The Regional Qualifier we will like to attend is

☐ **At least two team members would be able to attend the Grand Final in London on 18 September 1999.** If any team members are 15, permission is required from parent/guardian. Please enclose a letter from each parent/guardian indicating permission to enter has been granted.

☐ **I enclose a cheque/PO for £20 payable to The Playing Fields.** Your cheque will not be cashed until your entry is accepted and your rule pack sent to you.

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PCZ 01

TROUBLESHOOTER

Stuck on a game? Feel like you're sheltering from the rain in Bognor while everyone else is sunning themselves in the Caribbean? Well don't take refuge in the bingo hall just yet, here comes the *PC ZONE* Lear jet to whisk you off to where it's endless sunshine, talcum powder beaches and crystal-clear blue waters

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

104 CHEATMASTER
If at first you don't succeed... cheat. Allow Keith Pullin to show you how it's done.

105 DEAR KEITH
We know how frustrating it is to get stuck on a game. Which is why Keith Pullin's here to provide some answers.

106 HOW TO...
Confused, bamboozled, befuddled by the jargon surrounding computers and gaming? Don't worry, Phil Wand's guide will help you get your head around the meanings behind the mumbo-jumbo.

112 STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION
Going boldly where many would like to go to but don't know how to get there, Mark 'Faster Than A Photon Torpedo' Hill takes you with him through the *ST* galaxy.

116 DEAR WAZZA
Need a hand with a technical query that's bugging you? Our tech-head Wazza is here to help.

118 WATCHDOG
Not satisfied with the service you've received? Pissed off with being fobbed off? Allow *PC ZONE*'s Ann Robinson, Adam Phillips, to take up your case and twist some corporate knickers.

YOUR HOSTS

Warren Chrismas

Keith Pullin

Adam Phillips

Phil Wand

Mark Hill

CHEAT MASTER

It's not the taking part that counts, it's the winning. Winning means popularity and power. Cheating means winning. So here's a bit of what does you good

CHEATMEISTER Keith Pullin

ON THE CD

We've got more than 1200 games tips and solutions squeezed on to this month's free cover CD for you. Check out the Editorial section of your CD-ROM browser to track them down.

NEED HELP?

If your problem's game-related, get organised and...

WRITE TO Dear Keith/CheatMaster, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **'Dear Keith'** or **'CheatMaster'** in the subject line.

STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE

LucasArts/Activision

See if you can get anything extra out of this disappointing film tie-in with our galactic collection of cheats. Press backspace during the game and then type away one or more of the following...

i like to cheat Gives all weapons and adds 500 shots to weapon 2, 500 shots to weapon 3, 5 shots to weapon 4, 1 shot to weapon 5, and 10 shots to weapon 6

give me life Sets health to 100

heal it up Also sets health to 100

but i feel so good ToggleForce power high/normal

perfection Authorisation of Deadly Force (basically means Force colour changes to purple and you can kill enemies with one hit)

happy Toggle weapon 3 power-up on/off

from above Changes camera to overhead view. Type again to float camera round to rear view

naughty naughty Places camera directly behind you. Type it again for normality

iamqueen Play as Queen Amidala

iampanaka Play as Captain Panaka

iamquigon Play as Qui-Gon Jinn

iamobi Play as Obi-Wan Kenobi

perf Toggle wireframe graphics on/off

fps Toggle frame rate on/off

60fps Toggle frame rate 60/30fps

oldcod Displays 'debug 1'. Typing it again shows 'debug 2'. Use unknown

slowmo Toggle slow mode on/off

beyond cinema Toggle 'letter box' movie mode on/off

Turntables Cheat codes stop working. The only way to return things to normal is to exit the game and restart. Totally pointless

where is gurshick Run credits

gurshick Also shows credits

brenando Tech bonus

i rule the world Display 'Youd da Man' on screen

i really stink Skill level set to easy

kill me now Kill player

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 RACER

LucasArts/Activision

Staying with the *Star Wars* theme (God knows, the rest of the planet has), on the screen where you buy new stuff for your POD, press Shift, F4 and 4 for an extra $1000. Do this up to five times for a total of $5000.

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

NovaLogic

Finding it hard to stay airborne in NovaLogic's excellent flight sim? Stay cool, flyboy (or girl). Just press Ctrl and Enter followed by any of these case-sensitive codes. When you've typed the cheat, hit Enter to activate.

trust no one God mode

ghostpit Invisible aircraft

this isnt happening Restore plane to full working order

the truth is out there Unlimited ammo

fight the future Replenish current ammo

black oil Instant refuel

i want to believe Can't crash

KINGPIN

Interplay

Becoming the king of this controversial hill will be a lot easier with these cheats. Watch out for even more cheats for this game in next month's issue.

Start the game with the command line "+developer 1" to bring up the console during the game and type in the following:

Immortal Activates god mode
Give pistol
Give crowbar
Give shotgun
Give bazooka
Give flamethrower
Give health
Give cash ### (type in the amount you want)

MIDTOWN MADNESS

Microsoft

Another command line dabble here, but don't worry, it's easy. Type one or both, it's up to you. Eg C:\Midtown\midtown.exe -allcars -allrac

-allrace Access all races

-allcars Access all cars

X-WING ALLIANCE
LucasArts/Activision

Press Esc during the game and go to General Options. At the bottom of the screen you can set the preset values for F11 and F12. Set the beam level to zero. (If you already have a beam weapon, then forget it – it won't work.) While flying, press your newly edited F11 or F12 key, and somehow energy from your uninstalled beam laser is transferred into your engines. By doing this you can outrun a lot of basic ships, including the Y-Wing. Weird but handy. Sadly this only works on version 1.00. There's always a catch, isn't there?

TEST DRIVE 5
Accolade

Enter a race time on the high score screen (make sure the checkpoints are turned on) and type the following on the main menu:

Knacked	Reverse tracks
Whoooosh	Nitros (hit the horn while racing)
mjcim.rc	Small cars
sausage	Bonus cars

After entering the codes, make sure you save the game. That way you won't have to go through the whole rigmarole again. Also, if you use the Nitro code, don't try it until you're in at least second gear, otherwise you'll spin out.

MICROSOFT BASEBALL 2000
Microsoft

During a game, keep pressing 's' (spit) until the programmer baseball cards appear. Also, for some secret teams click on 'Help' and then 'About Baseball 2000'. Double right-click on the second line of the Copyright Notice and enter the team you want to be:

Microsoft	Play as Microsoft workers
Wizbang	Play as development team (including women)
Robots	What do you reckon?

DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME (DEMO VERSION)
Psygnosis

Press the '\' (talk) key, type cheat and hit return.

sanctuary	God mode
smeghead	Full health
debug on	Debug mode on
debug off	Debug mode off

PREMIER LEAGUE MANAGER 99
Gremlin Interactive

At the main menu type 'all teams' to access Spanish, German and Italian leagues from the start.

WORMS ARMAGEDDON
Team 17

Complete these missions and behold these new options as they wriggle out of your PC...

Mission 4	Laser sight
Mission 8	Jetpack
Mission 13	Fast walk
Mission 16	Invisibility in Net games
Mission 20	Low gravity
Mission 25	Indestructible landscape
Mission 33	Super banana bomb power-up

And if you make Elite rank in deathmatch mode, your entire maggot army becomes invincible. Finally, earn a gold medal and Elite rank in all missions to get *Full Wormage* game options. Nice.

CALL OUR TIPS LINE
0207 917 7698
THURS 1.30PM–5.30PM

Richard Crook here will answer any question you have. Possibly

Email us for a quick response: Tipszone@hotmail.com

DEAR KEITH

Playing computer games can sometimes be a terrible strain when things aren't going right for you, so *Keith Pullin*'s here to offer some help in the form of some hot hints and cheeky cheats

UNDER ALIEN CONTROL

Q In *Aliens Vs Predator* I can't really play as an alien. The control method is so bizarre that I don't know whether I'm upside down or the right way up. Also, on the first alien mission I can't find anywhere to go. I can only get through the first tunnel and then I'm stuck. I really can't make head nor tail of it.

Neil Wooton, Swindon

A **Well, the exit you're seeking is up on the ceiling in the second room. As for your control problem, I can't really help you apart from stating the obvious, which is that you need to practice. One thing you could do is play a few missions as a marine first of all to familiarise yourself with the overall feel of the game. You'll pick it up eventually.**

A SENSIBLE LETTER?

Q In *Sensible Soccer 2000*, every player I buy seems to flop worse than England in a Euro 2000 qualifier. Could you tell me who the best players are so that I can mount a serious title challenge?

Paul Soames, Bradford

A **Alan Shearer (Newcastle), Ronaldo (Inter Milan), Brian Laudrup (Rangers), Michael Laudrup (Ajax), Peter Schmeichel (Manchester United) and, surprisingly, Jon Dahl Tomasson (Newcastle). Buy any of these players and they won't let you down.**

A PUZZLED QUEEN

Q I've got an adventure called *Flight Of The Amazon Queen*, which was given to me by a friend who was clearing out a load of his old games. To be honest, I'm not much of an adventure connoisseur and I'm finding it a bit puzzling. Can you give me any hints or cheats, or just point me in the right direction?

Fredrick Ellery, Holly Head

A **I hate to give out blatant cheats, but because you're something of a novice in the adventure scene I'll make an exception. While playing the game, type in 'NEUROTOX' to access any screen in the game. This should help, and also give you a better idea of how adventure games work.**

PLAY US A TOON

Q How do I get out of jail in *Toonstruck*? Also, is it possible to get all my items back? Please help me or I'll never play the game again.

Pagid Brown, Fulham

A **Well we can't have that, can we? You can escape prison by walking around the cell until you build up a static charge, and then touch the keypad. Repeat this half a dozen times to reduce your jail sentence to nothing. Now look at the picture of a safe on the wall, and complete the sliding block puzzle to retrieve your items.**

BASKET CASE

Q I'm having a bit of a nightmare on *NBA Live 99*. My problem is defence – I just can't seem to stop my opponent's attacks and they score points every time. How can I tighten up this area of my game? Any advice please?

Alan Griggs, Whitby

A **Your centre is the most important player when it comes to defence, so make sure he's versatile. Good players for this position are David Robinson and Hakeem Olajuwon. With one of these guys installed in that position, your point guard is free to lock up other areas of the court.**

ANGEL EYES

Q I've recently got hold of *Requiem: Avenging Angel*, and I think it's one of the best games ever. However, I've become stuck. There just seem to be too many enemies to make any headway, and before I know it I'm an ex-angel. I'd be most grateful if you could help me in some way.

Samantha Turner, Lyme Regis

A **One of the most effective methods of progression is to make use of the possession power. Simply dive into an enemy's body when they're blasting you, and watch through their eyes as your dead carcass slips to the ground. Once in your new host, you can wander around with your foes without raising any suspicion.**

SOLDIER OF MISFORTUNE

Q I'm playing the sinking boat mission in *Hidden & Dangerous* but have become pinned down by sustained gunfire on the missile deck. I can't lob grenades because they tend to blow up the missiles, taking me with them. I don't know what to do. What do you suggest is the best plan of action?

Lenny Litchfield, Oxford

A **Sniper rifle. That's all there is to it. You just have to save ammo until that point and then pick off the two German commandos. Alternatively, you can always give another member of your team the rifle and then get them to do the deed. Ideally it's advisable to take two or three soldiers on to this level anyway.**

WIZARD OF OZ

Q Can you offer me some assistance on *Simon The Sorcerer*? I'm trying to find the staff so the wizards will turn me into a fully-fledged member of their order. I've searched everywhere but I can't seem to find it. Can you tell me where it is?

Mike Barnes, Australia

A **Go to the castle and ask the woodworm to do you a favour on the floorboards. Use the ladder to get down, and you should end up in front of a tomb. Open it and talk to the mummy inside. Continue down and grab the loose end of the bandages. Voilà – the staff. Now return to the village and chat with the wizards to complete the first part of your quest.**

LOST IN SPACE

Q What's the best faction to use in *Alpha Centauri*?

Kirk Woodhall, Ilford

A **What a ridiculous question. There is no best faction; they all have their advantages and disadvantages. My guess is that you're after someone who can quickly annihilate the rest of the planet. If that's the case, choose the formidable Spartans.**

HOW TO...

UNDERSTAND PC JARGON

© ILLUSTRATION Peter Gudynas / Zap Art

Confused by computers? Jumbled by jargon? Here are explanations of some common words, terms and phrases used in the gaming world

WRITER Phil Wand

English has the largest vocabulary of any language on the planet, which means there are many occasions when you come across a word, crumple your face and reach for a dictionary. 'Fecundation', for example. Perhaps 'tomentum'... While a copy of the *Concise Oxford* sheds light on these obscure words, many of today's more baffling ones relate to computers – and your dictionary won't give you a clue as to what they mean. Can you eat a chipset? Who wears teraflops? Does TFC have a secret recipe?

We've collected some of the more common terms and phrases, and put them alongside their definitions (words in bold have their own entry in the glossary). Not only that, we've also given you links to Web pages that will help you go beyond simple understanding and into enlightened bliss. So furrow your brow no longer and read on...

3D Accelerator *n.* Every **personal computer** comes pre-installed with a 2D graphics card which creates graphics for the **operating system** as well as for **applications**. In order to make 3D images though, a computer makes many millions of mathematical calculations each second, putting undue stress on its **CPU**. A *3D accelerator* takes the strain by doing all the calculations internally. Popular examples of **chipsets** include 3Dfx Interactive's **Voodoo**, NVIDIA's **Riva TNT** and S3's **Savage**. More information at www.3dfiles.com.

Upcoming titles like *Quake III* demand a top-notch 3D accelerator.

add-on pack *n.* See **mission pack**

ADSL *abbr.* Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line. A new technology for transmitting data at high speeds over your existing phone line. Compare **ISDN**. More information at www.adsl.com.

AFAIK *abbr.* As far as I know.

AGP *abbr.* Accelerated Graphics Port. Intel's technical specification that enables graphical information to be transmitted from a **3D accelerator** card and displayed on your monitor at ultra-high speeds. Please don't ask how it works. Most modern **Pentium** machines and **motherboards** include support for *AGP*. Latest systems feature super-fast *AGP 4X*, supported by cards such as the **Riva TNT** and **Savage**. More information at www.intel.com.

AI *abbr.* Artificial Intelligence, used as a generic term for computerised opponents. Marketed by **game publishers** as a highly developed form of inorganic sentience, *Abject Imbecility* is usually a better description.

ambience *n.* The atmosphere and general 'feel' of a gaming environment, usually used in comparison to real-world settings.

↑ ***Alien Vs Predator*** **has an ambience that scares the bejezus out of you.**

API *n.* Application Programmers Interface. A set of low-level instructions or concepts enabling access to an application's core functions. **Windows**, **DirectX**, **Internet Explorer** and Adobe **Photoshop** have freely available *APIs*, enabling programmers to use foundation code and thus cause a far larger degree of havoc.

Apple Mac *n.* Also *Macintosh*, *Mac* and *MacOS* (in reference to the computer's operating system). Widely acknowledged as the first mass-produced PC with a graphical user interface, *Mac* users these days tend to have **beards** and smell of wee. Compare **Windows**. More information at www.apple.com.

> **"Mac users *n.* tend to have beards and smell of wee"**

application *n.* A program whose primary function is to annoy, intimidate and confuse users. To a lesser extent it provides tools to accomplish a specific task. Games are *applications*, as they fit the description, but try explaining that to your boss. Most often though, *application* is used to describe programs such as **Word** or **Photoshop**.

ASCII *abbr.* American Standard Code for Information Interchange. The most popular coding method used by computers for converting letters, numbers, punctuation and control codes into digital form.

AUTOEXEC.BAT *n.* The first batch file opened and run by both **DOS** and **Windows**-based PCs. Usually found along with **CONFIG.SYS** in the **root directory** of the computer's first hard disc drive. These days your *AUTOEXEC.BAT* file shouldn't have much in it.

automagically *adv.* An automatic computerised or electronic process which, because of its baffling complexity, appears as though it was invoked by a sorcerer. "Don't worry, the installation program works *automagically*."

AVI *abbr.* Audio Video, Interleaved. File format for digital video and audio, most commonly adopted by people uploading hard-core porn flicks to their **website**.

bandwidth *n.* Usually used to describe the amount of data moving from one point to another in a particular time, for example 64 **kilobytes** per second (64Kbps). On **Usenet**, it is a generic unit of network capacity wasted by people complaining about how other people's messages are a waste of *bandwidth*.

batch file *n.* A simple text file storing a list of commands which are to be executed in strict sequence. Usually associated with text-based **operating systems**, and less so with **GUIs**. See also **AUTOEXEC.BAT**.

BBS *abbr.* Bulletin Board System, or more commonly plain *bulletin board*. A computer-based forum where users chat, exchange **email** and swap pictures of dubious sexual acts. Popular in the late '80s, the *BBS* is now dying thanks largely to **Usenet** and the **Internet**, although the idea is still retained in **Web** discussion forums. More information at www.ultimatebb.com.

Boneyards *n.* Cavedog's own multiplayer arena for their *Total Annihilation* series of games. More information at www.boneyards.com.

BTDT *abbr.* Been There, Done That. An ironic or witty assertion whereby the speaker makes it clear that he or she knows the subject intimately through personal experience. "Reinstalling **Windows** after a power cut? Yeah, *BTDT*."

beard *n.* The hair growing on the lower part of a man's face. In computer circles, a **geek** or **UNIX** administrator. "Jeez, Derek's turned into one serious *beard*." Also popular derivatives *beardy-weirdy* and *beardface*; *beardism* refers to discrimination against the hairy-faced.

Some beards are nice. Most of them are not.

benchmark *v.* & *n.* – *v* To gauge the capabilities of a component by rating its performance alongside your mate's **ninja bastard** or by running it through a series of standardised tests. These days used mainly to test the graphics performance of **3D accelerator** cards. – *n* The results of such tests.

bit *n.* The smallest unit of data, having a binary value of either 0 (off/false) or 1 (on/true). *Bits* are abbreviated with a lower-case 'b'. In most computers there are eight bits in a **byte**. See also **kilobit**.

bitmap graphics *n.* Images created with a matrix of pixels. Also called *raster graphics*. Examples of *bitmap* formats include Windows Bitmap (BMP), **Graphics Interchange Format** (GIF) and **Joint Photographic Experts Group** (JPEG). Compare **vector graphics**.

bits per second *n.* Also known as BPS. The number of **bits** transferred in a data communications system over a specific period of time (normally one second), giving an accurate measurement of speed. A 56Kbps modem is one that is capable of transferring 56,000 *bits per second*. See also **kilobit**.

Brooker *n.* See **Charlie Brooker**.

browser *n.* Any **application** displaying and interacting with information on the **World Wide Web**. The most popular browser is Microsoft's **Internet Explorer**. More information at www.browserwatch.com.

The Austin Powers Shag Browser, available free from www.austinpowers.com.

byte *n.* A unit of digital information that is eight **bits** long; abbreviated with an upper-case 'B'. Storage is measured in *bytes*; transmission capacity in **bits per second** or bps. See also **kilobit**, **kilobyte** and **megabyte**.

C&C *abbr.* **Command & Conquer**.

Carma *abbr.* Abbreviated form of *Carmageddon* and *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now* from British developers SCi Games.

Carmageddon: Welcome to the splatterdome.

CD-ROM *n.* Compact Disc Read Only Media. With the arrival and development of **DVD**, Consumer Device Rendered Obsolete in Months is a more fitting term.

CD *n.* Compact Disc. A standard medium for storing digital data in machine readable form, accessible with a laser-reading eye. *CD* readers are typically referred to as *CD-ROM drives*; writers as *CD-R*; and re-writers as *CD-RW*. Compare **DVD**.

Charlie Brooker *n.* Demented, crazy man kept in a locked room at the ***PC ZONE*** office. An old car tyre hanging from a rope keeps him placid. Favourite pastimes include eating ***PC Format*** readers, drinking benzoyl peroxide and talking to pretend people. More information at www.superkaylo.com.

It's Charlie Brooker. No, really.

chipset *n.* A group or arrangement of integrated components with a collective purpose, usually in reference to **3D accelerators** or **motherboards**. For example, the Diamond Viper 770 Ultra uses a variation of the **TNT chipset**, and the Raven Banshee uses **Voodoo**.

Civ *abbr.* Used to refer to Sid Meier's benchmark **turn-based strategy game** *Civilization* (*PCZ* #32, 80%) and also to *Civilization II* (*PCZ* #36, 90%). **Microsoft** and Activision bought the rights to the *Civ* moniker, and soon after released *Civilization: Call To Power* (*PCZ* #75, 89%). Sid Meier's latest game, *Alpha Centauri*, is best described as a space version of *Civ*. More information at www.alphacentauri.com.

Civ looks a bit dated these days, but its solid gameplay won countless fans worldwide.

CM3 *abbr.* *Championship Manager 3*.

Command & Conquer *n.* Seminal title from US **games developer** Westwood Studios

PC BENCHMARKING SOFTWARE

Finding the best 3D accelerator for your system

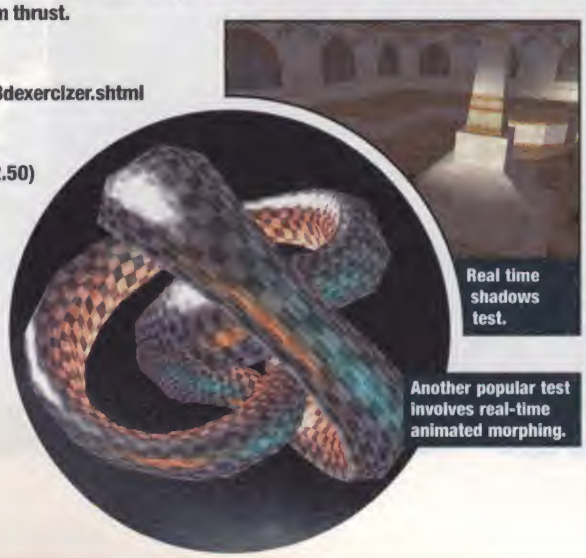
In the fast-moving world of 3D acceleration, working out which 3D accelerator is best for your system is a difficult job. With the help of benchmark software, you can cut through the marketing bullshit and see which hardware does the job best for you. Your card will be put through a series of gruelling tests. Many tools will also provide insight and information on how to tweak your particular set-up for maximum thrust.

3D ExerciZer $free
www.3dfxmania.com/utility/3dexercizer.shtml
6.4Mb download

3D Mark 99 MAX $19.95 (£12.50)
www.3dmark.com
18Mb download

3D WinBench 99 v1.2 $free
www.zdnet.com/zdbop
73Mb download

Final Reality v1.01 $free
www.finalreality.com
8Mb download



Real time shadows test.

Another popular test involves real-time animated morphing.

that propelled the popularity of the **RTS** genre into orbit. You build a base, arrange defensive structures, units and weaponry, then direct their forces against both **AI** and human opponents. See also **WarCraft** and **Red Alert**. More information at www.westwood.com

CONFIG.SYS *n.* Configuration file residing in the **root directory** of **DOS** and **Windows**-based PCs along with **AUTOEXEC.BAT**. Rather than a list of commands, *CONFIG.SYS* usually contains variables and settings pertaining to the **operating system**, for example volume levels and regional settings.

console *n.* Any plastic box capable of making games appear on your TV. Examples include the ubiquitous **Sony PlayStation, Sega Dreamcast and Nintendo 64.**

co-op *n.* Term used to describe any multiplayer game where one or more players work *co-operatively* as a team or squad. Compare **deathmatch**. See also **TFC**.

CPU *n.* Central Processing Unit. The core element of all computers, the *processor* (also *microprocessor*) is responsible for all the mathematical hard work. It contains all the circuitry that performs the instructions of a computer's **applications**, and costs a lot of money.

Intel's Pentium III processor. Do you want one, sir?

cracker *n.* One who breaks into a computer or an **application** with malicious intent. Computer crackers are there to bring the system down; software crackers are there to break **copy protection** and distribute the code to like-minded people. There is some deal of confusion as to the exact description. Compare **hacker**.

cyber- *prefix* Of or relating to the Internet and to a lesser extent the modern computer age.

deathmatch *n.* Originally coined in iD Software's *Doom*, deathmatch refers to any multiplayer game where all players are out for themselves – you see someone, you shoot them.

device driver *n.* Software that tells the computer how to talk to a peripheral device such as a **CD-ROM** drive, **3D accelerator** card or steering wheel. **Plug-and-Play** technology was supposed to do away with the need for *device drivers*.

DIMM *n.* Dual In-Line Memory Module. A 168-pin circuit board containing memory chips, now the adopted standard for most **motherboards**. Compare **SIMM**.

DirectX *n.* An **API** for producing and controlling graphics and effects in games. It gives direct access to enhanced hardware features under **Windows** 95/98/NT.

Doom *n.* Not the first **first-person shooter** to appear, but certainly the one that made everyone sit up and take notice. See also ***Quake*** and **'em up**.

Dig out your old copy of *Doom* – four-player games are still huge fun.

doormat *n.* Something you wipe your feet on.

DOS *n.* Disc Operating System, Dirty Operating System (or Defunct Operating System if you're a **UNIX** user). Can be used to describe any text-based operating system, but most commonly used in reference to Microsoft *DOS* (MS-DOS), which was just getting bearable when **Windows 95** came along and made it extinct. "Try **unzipping** it in *DOS*. It's quicker, and **WinZip** is **pants** anyway."

dot pitch *n.* Measured in millimetres, a lower value *dot pitch* or *dot size* means a sharper and clearer image. In general, 0.26 to 0.28 is considered the minimum level needed to display high-quality **multimedia** images; try to avoid higher numbers when purchasing new kit.

DVD *abbr.* Digital Versatile Disc, now more commonly (and, according to the manufacturers, incorrectly) referred to as Digital Video Disc. *DVD* discs are the same size as a regular compact disc, but are multi-layered and can be double-sided. This enables a much higher storage capacity. *DVD-ROM* refers to the read-only player; *DVD-RAM* or *DVD-R* to the writer. Also commonly *DVD-Audio* and *DVD-Video*.

dweeb *n.* Someone puny, friendless and/or unfashionable. See also **nerd** and **geek**.

dynamic lighting *n.* A feature whereby a game's environment is lit in real time, permitting objects to reflect other objects, cast shadows, and so on. Effects such as these almost always require **3D acceleration**.

email *n.* Electronic mail; text messages sent over the **Internet**. Also *E-zine* (magazine), *E-Text* (script or book), *E-Cash* (digital money) and a million other tired variations. Compare **snail mail**.

E3 *n.* Electronic Entertainment Exposition, the world's largest games show. Held this year at the Los Angeles Convention Center. More information at www.e3expo.com.

EISA *n.* Extended Industry Standard Architecture. Obsolete connectivity technology with a maximum data transfer speed of 33 **megabytes** per second. Compare **PCI**.

'em up *suffix* Used to describe the formulaic nature of a particular game, often in reference to its **genre**. Not usually used in a derogatory sense, although can be. Examples include *shoot 'em up*, *blast 'em up* (ie arcade) and *crash 'em up* (ie driving).

emulator *n.* An **application** capable of running video games intended for other platforms. More famous *emulators* include MAME (which runs arcade cabinet titles) and Bleem! (which runs PlayStation games). More information at www.bleem.com.

er *suffix* Slightly lame method of turning a verb into a noun for the purposes of describing a game. For example, shoot becomes *shooter* and blast becomes *blaster*. "It's an archetypal *3D blaster*."

eye candy *n.* Usually used to describe excessive or redundant visual effects in computer games. *Confectionery for the eyes*; sweet-tasting but of no nutritional value.

fest *suffix* Appended to a noun to accentuate its frenzied and slightly disturbing nature. Examples include *splatterfest*, *deathfest* and *gorefest*.

"CD-ROM *n.* Compact Disc Read Only Media. With the arrival and development of DVD, Consumer Device Rendered Obsolete in Months is a more fitting term"

first-person shooter *phr.* Game **genre** popularised originally by **Doom** and later by the likes of *Unreal* and **Half-Life**. The action is viewed as though from the eyes of the player character, much like in real life, and is one of the reasons why they've been linked to shootings and violence. Compare **top-down**.

FPS *abbr.* Frames Per Second, the unit of measurement of **frame rate**. The higher the *rate*, the smoother the action. "I'm getting about 30 *frames per second* in ***Half-Life***." Most monitors run at between 60 and 75 *fps*; European televisions at 25 *fps*; televisions in the US, Canada, Japan and Central America run at 30 *fps*. See also **frame rate**.

frame rate *n.* The speed at which consecutive video images are displayed. See also **FPS**.

FTP *abbr.* File Transfer Protocol for the exchange of files over the **Internet**. FTP is an application **protocol** that uses **TCP/IP**. Compare **HTTP**.

game publisher *n.* One who publishes games. Commonly this involves printing the manuals, printing some T-shirts and getting drunk at the launch party. When computers first hit high street stores, games were published by small companies and often by the author; these days, multinationals do the work. Compare **game developer**. More information at www.siia.net.

game developer *n.* One who develops games. Also referred to as *software author*. Examples include iD Software (*Doom*, *Quake*), Valve (*Half-Life*) and Pumpkin (*Warzone 2100*). Compare **game publisher**.

geek *n.* Someone who spends too much time with their head buried in books or in front of a computer screen. Hence *geek-out*, to work too hard; *geekarama*, a Dr Who convention.

genre *n.* A class of game having a particular form or characteristic. Examples of genre include *action*, *strategy* and *simulation*. Sub-genres include **RTS** (ie strategy) and **first-person** (ie action).

GIF *abbr.* Graphics Interchange Format. One of the two prime formats for **Web** images due to their compressed nature. *GIF files* are usually used when an image contains a lot of flat colour or simple lines. Compare **JPEG**.

gigabyte *n.* A gigabyte, or more commonly *gig*, is two to power 30, or 1,073,741,824 **bytes**. See also **megabyte**.

girlfriend *n.* Device that provides random audible warnings. For a girl to be happy with a boyfriend, she must understand him a lot and love him a little; for a guy to be happy with a *girlfriend*, he must love her a lot and not try to understand her at all. More information at www.virtuagirl.com.

GTA *abbr.* The top-down, in-yer-face driving game *Grand Theft Auto* from Dundee developers DMA Design. Race around American cities stealing trucks, flattening pedestrians and driving tanks over squad cars. Together with *Carmageddon* and *Doom*, was widely denounced as being the root of all evil, but was actually just a bloody good laugh. More information at www.dma.co.uk.

Your car's on fire and someone's murdered the local fire brigade. Typical.

hacker *n.* One who uses his computer skills to gain entry to unauthorised areas on a computer network or to restricted systems. *Hackerdom* often gets

upset when it is compared to the mischievous antics of **crackers**. Sufficeto say that both practices are likely to get you put in prison.

Half-Life *n.* Nominated as Game of the Year in 1999 by more than 40 publications worldwide, Valve Software's *Half-Life* (*PCZ* #71, 95%) is an astonishingly good **first-person shooter** based on iD Software's ***Quake*** engine. Regular readers should recall that we at ***PC ZONE*** were singing its praises months before anyone else had even heard of it. More information at www.valvesoftware.com.

HTML *abbr.* Hyper Text Markup Language. The code used to create **Web pages**.

Hypertext Transfer Protocol *n.* Usually abbreviated to *HTTP*. A set of rules for exchanging files and data over the **Web**.

Information Superhighway *n.* Also *infohighway* and *infobahn*. See **Internet**.

Internet *n.* The mother and father of all networks: a global network of networks in which users can retrieve and send information between computers. Each machine is assigned a unique **IP** address that other machines can query and connect to.

Internet Explorer *n.* Microsoft's **browser**, now available for a number of different operating systems. Early versions were buggy and lagged behind rival programs like Netscape's Navigator. Now in its fifth version, though, *Internet Explorer* (IE) is well ahead of the field and looks set to stay there, especially as it integrates so well with the **Windows** environment.

ISDN *n.* Integrated Services Digital Network (also *It Still Does Nothing*). A collection of standards for digital transmission over analogue wires. Telecom companies such as BT are still trying to make the technology look attractive with half-price installations and free calls. Don't waste your money. Wait for **ADSL** instead.

JPEG *abbr.* Joint Photographic Experts Group. A method of compressing files usually for display in a **browser**. Often used to reduce the file size of photographic images and textures. Compare **GIF**.

kilobit *n.* (Kb) One thousand **bits**. See **bits per second**.

kilobyte *n.* (KB) 2 to the tenth power, or decimal 1,024 bytes. See also **megabyte**. Compare **kilobit**.

lag *n.* The time delay between when a command is given by one computer and when it is received by another. Also referred to as latency. See also **ping**.

megabyte *n.* More commonly *meg*, means either 1,000,000 bytes or 1,048,576 bytes. See also **gigabyte**.

MIDI *n.* Musical Instrument Digital Interface. An industry standard connection for computer control of musical instruments and devices. Also used to refer to data files which contain pure digital information that triggers playback via a *MIDI*-compatible **sound card**. More information at www.midifarm.com.

mission pack n. A suite of new maps, levels or units tacked on to an existing title in order to lend it longevity and appease gamers while the software house works feverishly to fix bugs in the sequel. Also *Extra Missions*, *Add-On* and *Add-On Pack*.

motherboard *n.* The large chunk of insane-looking circuitry that is host to the majority of your PC's electronic internals. At the heart of any *motherboard* is the **CPU**.

multiplayer *adj.* Any game where players can go head to head in **deathmatch** or **co-op** over a network or the **Internet**.

MPEG *abbr.* Motion Picture Expert Group. A body that develops standards for audio and video compression. The music industry is sweating buckets over *MPEG* audio compression (MP3), as it enables music tracks to be compressed by 10:1 or more, making pirate distribution a quick and easy process. Video compression can produce VCR-quality video, and *MPEG 2* yields broadcast-quality images. More information at www.mp3.com

Macca *abbr.* David McCandless. ***PC ZONE*** contributor, musician, author, and famous for saying the word 'fuck' on television before it became fashionable. An ex-UK games champ. Watching *Macca* play ***Doom*** was like hitting fast forward on your eyeballs. Now old and withered, he enjoys fishing and iced buns. More information at www.wakeywakey.com.

Macintosh *n.* See **Apple Mac**.

multimedia *n.* The delivery of data or information by combining different formats – for example, motion video, audio, still images, graphics, animation, text and so on. Also slightly derogatory *multimeeja*.

NFS *abbr.* The game *Need For Speed*.

"PSX *abbr.* Common abbreviation for any small, grey lump of plastic gathering dust under the TV"

ninja bastard *n.* See **ninja PC**.

ninja PC *n.* Derived from the Japanese term for someone who adheres to *Ninjutsu* methods of martial art, a *ninja machine* is supremely fast and boasts all the top toys: fastest **CPU** on the market, fastest **3D accelerator** card, you name it – everything. One downside of owning a *ninja* is that all your mates think you have a small willy. But that's jealousy for you. Often also *ninja bastard* or just *ninja bast*, as in "That's one *ninja bast* machine you've got there."

NT *n.* See **Windows**.

online *adj.* Of or relating to the **Internet**, particularly the **Web** and **Usenet**. See also **geek** and **cyber-**.

operating system *n.* More commonly abbreviated to *OS*. The software program that, after being initially loaded into the computer, manages subsequent **applications**. These programs make use of the *OS* by communicating with it through its **API**. See **Windows**, **Linux**, **UNIX** and **MacOS**.

OS *abbr.* See **operating system**.

Paint Shop Pro *n.* Regarded unfairly as the poor man's **Photoshop**, JASC's *Paint Shop Pro* (PSP) has evolved into a worthy suite of graphics utilities. Exceptionally fast and compact, it lacks some of the features of its rival and has quirks that take a bit of getting used to. More information at www.jasc.com.

pants *adj.* Nonsense or complete rubbish; variation of *knickers*. In ***PC ZONE*** circles, any game scoring less than 20 per cent is given the official *Pants Award*. "Don't talk to me about **flight sims**. They're all *pants*, and only **geeks** play them." More information at www.pants.com.

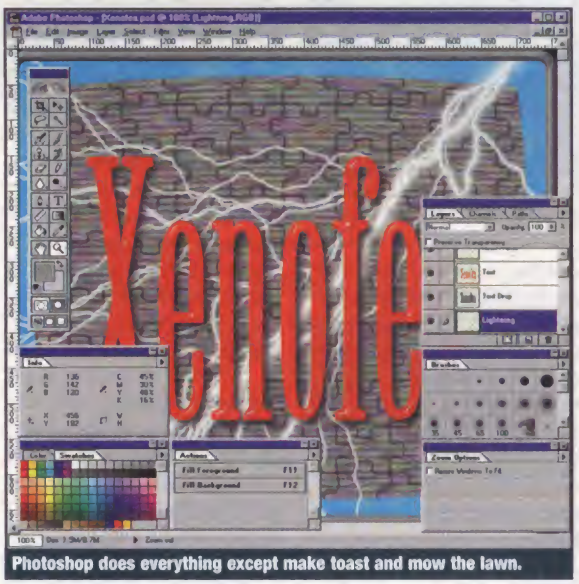
PC Format *n.* Erase your hard disk of all data. "My computer's chock full of junk. I need to *PC Format* and start over." See also **doormat**.

PC ZONE *n.* See **PCZ**.

PCI *abbr.* Peripheral Component Interconnect. A system allowing high-speed transfer of data between a **CPU** and its **peripheral** devices. *PCI* is now found on most **Windows**-based machines and also on modern **Apple Macs**. Compare **EISA**.

PCZ *abbr.* Short form of *PC ZONE*, the thing you're reading. Phenomenally popular and astoundingly great, *PCZ* makes every other magazine look **pants** by comparison. More information at www.pczone.co.uk.

Photoshop *n.* Hugely powerful image editing package from Adobe Systems Inc, and widely acknowledged as the industry standard graphics tool. Versions are available for a variety of formats including **Windows** and **Macintosh**. "Should look alright after I've run it through *Photoshop*." Compare **Paint Shop Pro**. More information at www.adobe.com.



Photoshop does everything except make toast and mow the lawn.

ping *n.* The delay between two networked computers, usually displayed in milliseconds. A higher ping means a longer delay and thus slower gameplay. See also **lag**.

pixel *n.* Invented word derived from *picture element*, a *pixel* is the smallest programmable visual element in a computer image. The real, visual size of a *pixel* depends on how you set the resolution for the display screen: higher resolutions mean finer *pixels*, and vice versa.

PlayStation *n.* See **PSX**.

Plug-and-Play *phr.* Abbreviated to *PnP*, *Plug-and-Play* is a standard enabling **peripheral** devices to be added to your computer, and the operating system to recognise what it is and what it does without the need for a **device driver**. **Microsoft** made a big deal about *Plug-and-Play* in their **Windows** operating system, despite the fact that users of other platforms (eg **Apple Macintosh**) had enjoyed it for around a decade.

processor *n.* See **CPU**.

protocol *n.* A set of data communications rules enabling two machines to exchange files without one of them getting confused in the process. In the same way that English is the accepted communications *protocol* for this country, so **TCP/IP** is the accepted *protocol* for the **Internet**. See also **HTTP**.

PSP *abbr.* See **Paint Shop Pro**.

PSX *abbr.* Common abbreviation for any small, grey lump of plastic gathering dust under the TV or providing shelter to woodlice in the attic. "Mum, you seen my *PSX*?" Also known as the Sony **PlayStation**. More information at www.playstation.com.

publisher *n.* See **game publisher**.

Q3 *abbr. Quake III.* See also ***Quake***.

Quake *n.* Seminal **first-person shooter** from iD Software. Despite worldwide popularity, ***Half-Life*** has been deemed the better game. More information at www.idsoftware.com

refresh rate *n.* The higher the refresh rate, the less your screen flickers. When buying, aim for a monitor with a *refresh rate* of at least 70Hz. See also **FPS**.

Riva TNT *n.* Developed by nVIDIA Inc, the *Riva TNT* is a brand of **3D accelerator** and the main rival to current market leader **Voodoo**. Stay tuned for *TNT2 Ultra*. More information at www.nvidia.com.

Diamond's Viper V770 Ultra, which uses the latest TNT2 chipset. Note the cooling fan on its processor.

rock bells *phr.* Excellent or outstanding. "This new **Voodoo** card really *rocks bells*." Compare **pants** and **sucks**.

root directory *phr.* The topmost directory of your hard disc. To see the contents of your root directory from within the **Windows** environment, double-click on the My Computer icon and then double-click again on the C: drive icon.

RTS *abbr.* Real-Time Strategy, or *Really Tedious Strategy* if this sort of thing isn't your cup of tea. *RTS* gets its name from the way all players make their moves at the same time. After Westwood's award-winning *Dune II* (*PCZ* #1, 89%), Blizzard released ***WarCraft*** which was fundamentally the same basic game, but with two resources to manage and comprehensive network play options. Westwood hit back in 1995 with the now legendary ***Command & Conquer*** (*PCZ* #28, 95%), which, although it didn't progress the real-time concept, had widespread appeal and was based more on reality than on fantasy. Blizzard came to the fore again with *WarCraft II* (*PCZ* #78, 81%), and then Westwood followed up soon after with their landmark game ***Red Alert*** (*PCZ* #47, 94%). Recent examples of the genre include *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* (*PCZ* #78, 94%) and *Warzone 2100* (*PCZ* #75, 90%). Compare **Turn-Based Strategy**.

***Warzone 2100*: one of the most enjoyable RTS games to appear in recent years.**

Savage *n.* A brand of **3D accelerator** developed by S3 Inc, and a rival to **Voodoo** and **Riva TNT**. *Savage4* includes support for **AGP** 4X and 32-bit colour. More information at www.s3.com.

SIMM *n.* Single In-Line Memory Module. A 72-pin circuit board containing memory chips. Compare **DIMM**.

snail mail *n.* Also *snailmail*. Derogatory term for the Royal Mail. Compare **email**.

Sony PlayStation *n.* See **PSX**.

suck *v.* To be pointless or objectionable. Thus "You *suck*!" to describe someone's skill at a game; "This *sucks*!" to describe the game itself. See also **pants**. Compare **rock bells**.

TA *abbr.* Cavedog's screen-shakingly brilliant *Total Annihilation* (*PCZ* #56, 92%). Also seen as *Total Anal Lotion*. The recent release of *TA: Kingdoms* (*PCZ* #78, 94%) should mean that Cavedog continue to rule the **RTS** genre. More information at www.cavedog.com.

TCP/IP *abbr.* Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol is the universal, two-layered language of the **Internet**. All machines online use this **protocol**, and are thus able to communicate easily with one another.

teraflop *n.* A processing speed of a trillion floating point operations per second.

TFC *abbr. Team Fortress Classic*, an add-on for ***Half-Life*** that transforms the original game into a superb squad-based blaster. More information at www.teamfortressclassic.com

It's amazing what some *TFC* players will do to help their team...

top-down *n.* A game in whiche the player's perspective is looking down from above. See also **first-person shooter**.

turn-based strategy game *n.* A game in which players take it in *turns* to make their moves. Compare **RTS**.

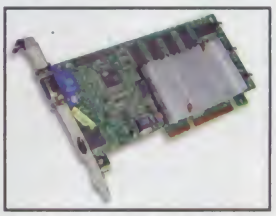
UNIX *n.* An **operating system** dating back to the late '60s, *UNIX* still forms the backbone of the **Internet**. Apache, the world's most prevalent **Web server** software, is designed for the *UNIX*. The system is not owned by anyone, is written in a standardised format, and is constantly evolving to adopt new ideas and needs. Many people regard it as the nemesis of **Windows.**

URL *n.* Uniform Resource Locator. Used to describe file addresses on the Internet. *URLs* contain both the **protocol** required to access the resource, together with its **domain name** and file location. For example http://www.intel.com/search.htm. The first section (http://) refers to the **HTTP** Web protocol; the second (www.intel.com) is the domain; the last (/search.htm) is the file location on Intel's server.

Usenet *n.* Also *newsgroups*, and most commonly just plain *news*. A huge, ever bloating collection of messages posted by individuals to thousands upon thousands of discussion forums (ie the *newsgroups*) on every subject from Alabama to Zen Buddhism. More information at www.deja.com.

vector graphics *n.* Images created with a series of lines, or *vectors*. Unlike **bitmap graphics**, they can be scaled to any size as the information they contain is not absolute; the *vectors* are simply repositioned and redrawn at the required size. Examples of *vector* formats include Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) and Windows Metafile (WMF).

Voodoo *n.* Market-leading **3D accelerator** brand developed by 3Dfx Inc. Rival products such as **Riva TNT** have recently closed the gap. *TNT2* is a more advanced bit of kit on paper, offering 32-bit rendering, but we've yet to see a benchmark that puts the *Voodoo* behind. Currently there is simply no faster alternative. More information at www.3dfx.com.



The Voodoo3 3000, using the ubiquitous Voodoo chipset. This particular card has a TV out, enabling you to play games on your telly.

voxel *n.* A *volume pixel*, or *voxel*, is an electronic approximation of 3D space. In the same way that a **pixel** has a fixed width, a *voxel* has a fixed width, length and depth. *Voxel Space* made its debut in 1992 in the hugely successful *Comanche: Maximum Overkill*, and can now be seen in places like the medical industry. The upcoming *Red Alert: Tiberian Sun* uses the technology.

Web *n.* Also *WWW* and, more properly, *World Wide Web*. Invented by an Englishman called Tim Berners-Lee, *Web* refers to all the resources, machines, files, users and abusers that send and receive data using the standard **Hypertext Transport Protocol** (HTTP) across the **Internet**. See also **website**. More information at www.w3c.org.

Web browser *n.* See **browser**.

Web page *n.* Any **HTML** document stored on a Web server, and accessible to anyone with a **browser**.

Web server *n.* The machine that acts as home to **Web pages**. Most *Web servers* can be accessed by anyone with an **Internet** connection. A visit to your local **search engine** would make you believe most servers contain illegal porn. They don't.

website *n.* Also commonly *web site*. A collection of **Web pages**.

Windows *n.* Successor to **DOS**, Microsoft's graphical **operating system** has as many enemies as it does friends. Early versions were dreadful, getting manageable by version 3.3 which, unbelievably, is still found in many city institutions and in the financial sector. *Windows 95* was better to look at but not very reliable. *Windows 98* included a raft of new features and decent Internet connectivity. *Windows NT* is the 32-bit environment designed for power users and workgroup servers. Watch out for *Windows 2000* coming soon. Compare **Apple Mac**.

WinZip *n.* Windows-based utility to aid the creation and extraction of **ZIP** archives. The program has numerous foibles that render the program useless in certain situations, as *PC ZONE* staff regularly testify. More information at www.winzip.com.

Wireplay *n.* Online gaming arm of British Telecom. More information at www.wireplay.com.

Word *n.* Microsoft Word, the industry standard word processor. Hopelessly convoluted, hideously bloated and with more meaningless functions than a book on vector algebra, it's been calculated that 80 per cent of *Word* users need only around 10 per cent of its features. More information at www.microsoft.com/word.

World Wide Web *n.* See **Web**.

STAR TREK: BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

STRATEGY GUIDE

Going boldly where many would like to go but don't know how to get there, *Mark Hill* leaves a trail through the galaxy for you to follow

REVIEWED *PCZ* #78 **SCORE** 89%

Lots of stars to explore, so build more scout ships right away.

Birth Of The Federation offers so much depth that we'd have to devote an entire issue to cover every aspect of it *(Don't even think about it – Ed)*. Even then there would be lots of eventualities we'd have to miss out. Not only does each game start with a randomly generated map, there are also many random events that pop up unexpectedly and change the way the campaign goes. What we can provide are some general guidelines to steer you through the diplomatic minefield and resource mismanagement that stand in the way of success.

SEEK OUT AND EXPLORE

You start the game with a scout and a colony ship for a very simple reason: your immediate objectives are to explore the galaxy around you and start expanding. Your scout ship has the greatest range and enables you to choose which way to expand (where the uninhabited systems are, those rich in materials, those with a large capacity for growth etc). Don't spend too much time deciding where to establish your first colony though, as you need to expand quickly if you want your empire to be a force to be reckoned with (and you can count on your rivals doing the same).

You should also invest some time terraforming all the planets in the system you want to control. Habitable planets are crucial in terms of resources and future growth. If you encounter systems with dilithium, colonise them at once. Dilithium is the most precious material in the *Star Trek* galaxy, as it's essential for the construction of ships. Having these systems in your possession also means that other major races can't access the dilithium in them – unless they're after a fight.

Don't waste time grouping your ships into task forces – at this stage speed is of the utmost importance – otherwise you'll be left lagging behind. Which ships you decide to build next depends largely on how the galaxy appears around you as you explore it. If you see that there are a number of stars within scanner range that are in opposite directions, you should build another scout ship so you can cover the maximum amount of space. On the other hand, if you've found a system with a wealth of materials and has loads of M-class planets close by, you should build another colony ship and start expanding.

Try to balance your build list with structural improvements and essential facilities – if all you do is spit out ships, you'll soon reach a point of stagnation. The next ship you *do* build should be a troop transport, which you can use to establish an outpost. These are essential for expanding your range and area of influence, besides being of extremely high strategic importance. If you expand quickly and early enough, you'll have a large part of the galaxy under your control before you even have to start worrying about the other major races, particularly if you're playing in a large galaxy.

This Klingon ship might be a bird, but it's armed to the teeth.

THE DIPLOMACY GAME

Another way to expand quickly is to convince minor races to join you. Not only will your range grow dramatically (especially if their systems are some distance from yours), you can also use their resources and turn their

Klingons building warships? Has the world gone absolutely mad?

When you've assembled a fleet this size, almost nothing can stand in your way.

Ferengi ships look like galactic crabs, and move like them too.

You need loads of ships to defeat a cube, or you really are borg-ered.

Expand, expand, expand. It's the only way forward.

Playing as the Federation you wouldn't want to be friends with him, but as a Klingon or Cardassian his mob might be good allies.

THE UNITED FEDERATION OF PLANETS

Welcome, terrestrially challenged people. We don't wish to offend, we just want to be your friends

With scarcely a dishonest bone in its multicultural body, the Federation is the only empire to be made up of several different species. It's no surprise, then, that its greatest strength lies in diplomacy – the only way to keep so many races happy is to balance everyone's interests and find means of settling disputes other than by armed conflict.

When playing as the Federation, you need to keep your reputation in mind and remember that your citizens expect nothing less than total honesty and peaceful exploration. Declare war on an empire that isn't threatening you, or colonise a planet using brute force, and you could have a potential revolt on your hands. Likewise, break your treaties or turn your back on a friend and your people will be unhappy. On the other hand, when you play against the Federation you can manipulate their uprightness to your own advantage. Once you have their confidence, it takes nothing less than evil tactics to make them declare war on you. When they do, their first priority is to protect their own systems. If one of them falls under your command, they'll use all their military resources to regain it.

Because the Federation expands through the generosity of its gifts to minor races, you need to convince these races to join you first. The virtuous humans (it is science fiction, after all) won't encroach on territory you've affiliated through diplomacy, but they will try their hardest to liberate the systems you conquer. Surround Federation space with systems that have become members of your empire by choice, and you effectively cut any chance for their expansion.

Focus on just one race to sabotage, or you'll be spreading your intelligence resources too thinly.

THE KLINGON EMPIRE

We will crush you like the worthless *qoghs* you are

Unimpeded by a whinging moral code, Klingons get to have all the fun. They're single-minded barbarians who combine the latest technological advances in weapon research with a truly primitive mentality. In some ways, playing as the Klingons involves the complete opposite of the Federation way. You expand through violent conquest, subjugating minor races and stealing their resources. Forming peace treaties is seen as a sign of weakness; but don't be fooled, you won't get anywhere in this game unless you master the subtleties of diplomacy. Because of their strict honour code, Klingons never break their pacts. Keep your side of the bargain and they respect you; cross them and they'll treat you like pathetic children.

While you needn't worry about Klingons sneaking round your back and deceiving you, you can expect an ever-rising series of aggressive demands. During battles they pounce on any sign of weakness and show no mercy. Be sure to have a strong fleet before engaging them in battle, as they hardly ever retreat and will start launching their own attacks. Their dogged worship of war leads them to invest most of their resources in battleships and, as a result, you may find that their infrastructure is weak. Set aside a large percentage of your sabotage reserves and hit them where it hurts.

THE CARDASSIAN UNION

"Would you like to work in our concentration camp?"

Loosely based on the Nazis, this lizardy race are absolutely convinced of their own superiority and will stop at nothing to get what they want.

As with the Romulans, you should be very wary of any diplomatic approach made by the Cardassians. It's usually just a ploy, and they'll betray you at the earliest opportunity. By all means join forces with them if it suits your needs at the time, but be prepared for a surprise attack and a jump from friendship to war. They won't even try to forge alliances with minor races – enslavement is the favourite past time, after all.

The warning about the Romulan intelligence applies here too. The Obsidian Order is an extremely powerful, Gestapo-like organisation that doesn't always follow government orders. It does its damndest to stop all your attempts at sabotage, while at the same time stealing information and bombing your resources.

TOP TEN TIPS

Here we've condensed the strategy to achieve success into ten bite-sized, easily digestible chunks...

1 When colonising a new system, it's a good idea to buy your way to all the essentials (organics plants, fabricators...). Waiting for the microscopic population to build them takes ages.

2 When at war, position a couple of ships in an enemy system and raid it until you've sucked it dry. Then bombard it and make it yours.

3 Food is always a priority. Make sure there's a surplus so the population can grow to its full capacity. The more people you have, the faster you can build things.

4 Only buy an item on your build list if it's going to take more than five turns or if you need them desperately, otherwise you'll be spending big bucks on something you could have had for free.

5 Make use of your cloaking device if you have it. A large fleet of cloaked Strike Cruisers can work wonders.

6 If you play as the Klingons, peace treaties sap your morale and productivity goes out of the window. If you're looking to gain allies, sign a war pact instead.

7 Some technology fields, such as energy and biotech, are researched faster than others, so take away a percentage of research and invest it in slower technologies like weapons.

8 For every technological level you go up in propulsion, the range of your ships also increases. This is especially important if you're playing in a large galaxy.

9 Don't let the computer build things automatically unless you have dozens of systems and can keep track of them all. The AI tends to build what it wants to, rather than what the system needs.

10 The Vulcans make great members of your empire. As soon as you meet them, shower them with gifts and keep offering them friendship until they accept.

The Vulcans make a formidable addition to your empire, and they're easier to convince if you play as the Federation.

Don't try to deceive the Betazoids, they can read your mind.

worlds into factories. It's always a good idea to wait for them to develop before you offer them membership, because while a minor race is on its own it builds and evolves very quickly. Some races allow you to use special bonuses, like the Vulcan Science Academy, which boosts your research. The Bolians, the bright blue-skinned creatures, give you a 50 per cent increase in espionage, thanks to their aesthetic skills which are perfect for surgical alterations. The Mentakans give you a 100 per cent food production increase, and the Sheliaks give you a 100 per cent biotech research increase.

Always try to get friendly with races that have similar features to your own, otherwise you could be wasting time and credits on a species that is never going to have more than a neutral attitude towards you. If you pretend to be loving, caring and peaceful, and then involve your new members in wars they have no interest in, you'll see their morale drop.

Always keep an eye on morale in all your systems, as it affects production ability. Content people give you an increase of up to 10 per cent, while apathetic (0% to -13%), disgruntled (-32% to -47%) and defiant (-50%) all decrease your production, which eventually adversely affects research and intelligence.

Don't offer membership too soon or you'll stunt their natural progress.

Once you've met this lot, step up your internal security – their spies are extremely devious.

The Ferengi can set up trade routes with races they've just met, even if they're not friendly ones.

MAKE IT SORE

Diplomacy might be the key to the game, but unless you have a strong military presence you'll eventually get wiped out by someone who does. It's always a good idea to build up your weapon systems with defence in mind to begin with, then think about going on the offensive.

If your outposts or starbases are threatened, leave a starship there. When enemy fleets attack, they tend to concentrate on destroying the starbase, enabling your starship to destroy them unhindered. If you leave your starbases unprotected they'll soon be obliterated.

Create task forces of warships and keep them in strategically sound places. When you're ready to go on the offensive, it's much more effective to confront an enemy fleet with a large task force than it is to have many ships scattered about. Keep command ships out of these task forces, since they only have a short range, thus crippling your strike area. To make sure the more powerful ships can reach faraway places, you need to either build outposts or gain control of minor-race systems.

When your borders have been established and you've expanded as far as you can through peaceful means, you should concentrate your production solely on warships, ignoring colony and scout ships unless they're really necessary. At this stage, troop transports are much more useful than colony ones, since they greatly reduce the time required to take control of an enemy system. PCZ

CHEAT SPACE NINE

If something's worth having, it's worth cheating in order to get it

This cheat enables you to see the whole galaxy in your very first turn. Smart, isn't it?

If the Romulan and Cardassian way of things sit right at home with you, there's only one way to go: cheat. Don't use these codes if you have Klingon blood in your veins though – think of the shame, the dishonour!

To enable the cheat mode, you need to run the game and add '–Mudd' to the command line (for example: C:\boft\Trek.exe –Mudd, depending on where you've installed the game). Click on the Start button, and then Run. Browse your games directory until you find Trek.exe, open it, then add the extra command. It's like having Bond's Q on your side. When the game's running, press the following:

F9 RESEARCH This puts your research up by a 100 per cent. Keep pressing it until you're happy with your technological level

F10 MONEY This is every Ferengi's fantasy. Each time you press it, 10,000 credits are added to your intergalactic bank account

F11 MAP This reveals the entire map of the galaxy. Press it again and all the new system names disappear

An occasional truce is always good to build up your strength.

You don't want this on your screen.

If the small fry won't join you, declare war on them.

THE ROMULAN STAR EMPIRE

"We come in peace… My, what a stabbable back you have"

Although descended from the pathologically peaceful and logical Vulcans, the Romulans are deceitful buggers who place their own self-interests above anything else. All their diplomatic dealings are intended to lull their victims into a false sense of security before they release the full power of their fleet. It's no coincidence that the Romulans developed the cloaking device, which enables them to appear in their unsuspecting opponents' space undetected. Their possessiveness leads them to treat territorial borders as sacred – cross into their space or a disputed system and they'll treat it as a major offence. Don't even bother to demand territory from them.

As you'd expect from this kind of race, they have an awesome infrastructure – their intelligence network is especially well-developed. Once you've encountered the Romulans, it's always a good idea to step up your internal security. And beware of spying on them or trying to sabotage them, because the Tal Shiar is extremely efficient in rooting out infiltrators and turning their capture in their favour.

THE FERENGI ALLIANCE

What's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine too

Arguably the weakest of the main races, the Ferengi's only concern is profit. Their entire society, even their philosophy, is based on commerce and the omnipotence of money. But while they use a small amount of resources in researching and building weapons, you can be certain that they'll be buying a formidable arsenal with which to defend their profit.

Because of this obsession, the Ferengi are quite predictable. Shower them with gifts and they'll be your closest friends; refuse their economic demands and they'll raise their squeaky voices to an obscene pitch of insults.

Expansion is always based on bribery, since being at war with anyone hinders trade. Unlike other races though, the Ferengi can set up trade routes with any system, regardless of its status of friendship (and as long as war hasn't been declared).

Finally, remember the Seventeenth Rule of Acquisition when dealing with these large-eared Del Boys: A contract is a contract is a contract (but only between Ferengi).

DEAR WAZZA

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IN THE SURGERY Dr Warren Chrismas

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EMAIL Address your letters to us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** with the subject heading **'Dear Wazza'**.

Please note: while we can assure you that we read *every* techie query sent to us, we are unable to offer personal replies. Also, please do not phone, as you're unlikely to reach someone who can help. Thanks.

3D NOW AND AGAIN

Q I recently bought a 350MHz AMD K6-2 3D NOW! chip. I was wondering – as I'm sure loads of others are – whether the 3D NOW! technology works on all games using DirectX 6. I know it works on *Quake II* (which I got a patch for) and *Warzone 2100* (which says on the side of the menu that 3D NOW! is supported).

Incidentally, anyone with a 350MHz version of the K6-2 processor (or faster) who's getting an error message when starting Windows 95 should go to the Microsoft website and find the special AMD update.

William Gibbons

A DirectX 6.x is 3D NOW!-optimised, so all the games which use it should benefit to a degree. However, to take full advantage of the 3D NOW! features, games need to be specifically written with the chipset in mind. You can find everything you need to know on the subject at www.amd.com/products/cpg/3dnow/3ddirectx.html**.**

The AMD patch referred to fixes a Windows timing loop problem which is sensitive to processor frequency (in other words, it's an operating system bug, not a hardware fault). The problem only occurs with the Windows 95 versions OSR2, OSR2.1 and OSR2.5.

To check which version of Windows 95 you have, right-click on My Computer and select Properties. If the version number has a 'B' on the end and you own a 350MHz (or faster) AMD K6-2 processor, you should download the 290K patch from www.microsoft.com/download/ **(enter 'AMD'" as a keyword to find the file).**

SIDEWIND-UP

Q I (and thousands of others like me) need your help. Yes, it's that old favourite the MS Force Feedback Pro playing up again. I have Windows 95 and DirectX 6 installed. I'm not sure which version of the drivers I have – they're the ones that it came with. I have the joystick plugged into my Opti931 SoundBlaster Pro-compatible sound card, and everything seems great when I test it out in Control Panel. It's when I want to play games that this Microsoft beast bites me in the ass.

As soon as I go into a game which uses the joystick, I lose all control, as if the joystick isn't calibrated. When I quit the game and go back to Control Panel, I find to my horror that Windows 95 has changed the settings to a Sidewinder Gamepad.

I've looked around on the Microsoft website, and this problem is completely ignored – even though their newsgroups have loads of people with the same problem. Please help me and the rest of the Force Feedback world to get our sticks working and restore happiness in our lives.

If no-one out there can help, then can someone at least give Bill Gates a damn good kicking – I'll put up the 100 quid he got from me as a bounty.

Chris Dexter

A Charming! Actually we think you owe Mr Gates an apology, as Microsoft have *comprehensive* support for the SideWinder controller range on their website – far better than you get from most peripheral manufacturers.

There's a SideWinder Force Feedback Pro FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions), for starters, which you can find at http://support.microsoft.com/support/hardware/forcefeedback/faq/default.asp**. Anyone getting a 'Not Connected' problem with a Sidewinder controller (quite common, by all accounts) should head directly to** http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q218/6/15.asp**.**

We haven't got space to run through the specifics here, but there's advice for owners of Opti931 sound cards at http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q172/6/97.ASP**. Also, make sure you have the latest drivers (Microsoft SideWinder Game Controller Software 3.02), which you can find at** www.microsoft.com/sidewinder**.**

If none of this helps, we suggest you take the joystick back to the store where you purchased it, although you may want to talk to Microsoft's technical support team first (their phone number should be in the manual).

BANSHEE-ASY

Q I'm sitting here reading about Matt and his problem with *Grand Theft Auto* in your June issue (*PCZ* #77) which arrived on Friday – subscriptions rock! *(Of course – Ed)*. Anyway, I also have a 3Dfx Banshee accelerator and have had numerous unanswered communications with Creative Labs – not that I'm griping. You said that you couldn't get a *GTA* patch for Voodoo2/Banshee. Well,

"I've heard that it's possible to 'overclock' (speed up) your processor by changing jumpers on the motherboard. Is this true?"

BRIAN LIDDLE HAS A NEED FOR SPEED

£50 WINNER!

RESTORATION JOB

Q Ever tried to install/uninstall something, only to find that when you restart, Windows is completely screwed? Or just found that Windows isn't working properly for no apparent reason? Perhaps you've been playing around with the registry and experienced the same?

Well, if you're running Windows 98 there's an easy(ish) solution to restore your registry to a working state. When your computer is starting up (just after it goes through the BIOS checks and emits its cheery little bleep), start holding the left control key. A Windows start menu should eventually appear. The option you need to select is 'Command Prompt only' (usually number 5, but not always).

After a bit of whirring and clicking and a few messages, you should find yourself at the DOS prompt. Now simply type: SCANREG /RESTORE and hit enter. You're then presented with a number of options, all listed with a date. All you have to do is select a date on which your machine was working, and hey presto, your registry is restored to the state it was in the first time your computer booted on that particular day (this backup is one of the reasons Windows 98 takes longer to start up. Hopefully you'll be more forgiving of this fact now).

Handy, eh? If you've installed any programs after the date of this file, then these need to be re-installed. You can also make a snapshot of your registry at any particular time (when you've just installed Windows and your base applications, but no troublesome games) by clicking on start, then run, and typing SCANREGW. It informs you that the registry has already been backed up today – tell it to do it again anyway and it dutifully does. I hope this is of use to those who thought they had no option but to wipe the hard disc and re-install.

Sam Bashton

A Concise, well-written and *useful* information. Sam Bashton, we salute you! Fifty quid is on its way.

Grand Theft Auto: Bansheed at last.

I looked and looked and looked, and eventually, after trying three that didn't work, I found one that did. Joy!

To find the relevant patches for games, it's well worth making your presence known on the Usenet newsgroup relevant to your graphics card. I got involved in the *GTA* debate on the Banshee newsgroup.

Anyway, the most helpful website I've found for Banshee related issues – and the place to get the *GTA* patch – is Bill's Workshop (**www.billsworkshop.com/**), which is run by a guy who used to work for 3Dfx or something. Moral of the story: persevere, and don't underestimate the power of a newsgroup – they're not all porn, you know!

Peter McConnochie

A I think we've already solved the *GTA* problem, haven't we? Whatever, you're right about newsgroups, they are a good place to visit for advice. Wade through the inevitable spam and crap and you should find a group frequented by like-minded people, some of whom are bound to have suffered similar problems to your own.

Ironically, our service provider doesn't show a dedicated Banshee newsgroup, but there are many 3Dfx-related sites, including 3Ddfx.game.discussion and 3Dfx.game.support.

UH-OH!

Q I've heard that it's possible to 'overclock' (speed up) your processor by changing jumpers on the motherboard. 1) Is this true? 2) How is it done? 3) Can it damage the chip? 4) Does it make your PC faster? 5) Overall, is it a good idea? By the way I have an Olivetti P75 which I've had for about three years.

Brian Liddle

A 1) With many PCs, yes. 2) Er... by changing jumpers on the motherboard or, with some systems, simply by changing BIOS settings. 3) Yes! 4) Yes! 5) Yes. And no.

We know of plenty of people who've managed to overclock their processors with no problems whatsoever – in fact we ran several letters (mostly positive) from readers on the subject in our Xmas issue (*PCZ* #71). However, as we stated before, over-clocking processors is something we refuse to advocate, simply because if things go wrong there's a very real risk of permanently damaging your computer. We are, however, willing to point you in the direction of more information – try www.hardwarecentral.com/hardwarecentral/subjects/75/, www.tomshardware.com/overclock.html **and** www.sysopt.com/overc.html**. But hey, use the info *at your own risk!***

THE HEAT IS ON

Q I've just been reading your June issue (*PCZ* #77) and came across a problem which sounds similar to one which I had a few months ago, so I thought I'd share how it was solved. It sounds to me like the reason Steve Henningsen's PC has been crashing after an upgrade is because it's overheating.

I purchased an AT tower case, with an AT motherboard and 350MHz Pentium II processor, and installed a 16Mb Banshee graphics card. As soon as I got it home I had problems. When I tried to log on to the Internet, after a few minutes my PC would completely lock up. This also happened when I played most of my games.

I took the PC back and was told that it was overheating due to the size of the case (the hot air wasn't dispersing quickly enough). Anyway, to cut a long story short, I traded my old case and motherboard for a new ATX case and ATX motherboard. This fixed all those problems.

Michael Wescott

A A valid point, Michael, although there are ways around heat problems in older (AT) systems without having to switch to ATX-format components. Things to try include the repositioning of cards and cables, and the installation of improved or additional fans (available from any decent computer store). The low-tech solution, of course, is to run your PC with the lid off, but that's not recommended.

ATX-based systems are designed for better air flow, and include heat sensors which show up any irregular temperatures (check your manual for details), although even ATX machines can still suffer from overheating problems if they're overburdened with interface cards and drives.

Anyway, regarding the same query...

WIPE OUT

Q I've had similar problems to Steve Henningsen, and my solution is as follows: Firstly, run a virus check. Then try disabling the power management systems and the screensaver and see what happens. If that doesn't cure the problem, try re-installing Windows.

Still having no luck? Then unplug your system and (making sure that you're grounded to prevent static damage), take out your processor, memory and graphics card, and wipe the edge connectors with methylated spirit to clean them. Once the components have dried, re-install them, making sure that they're seated properly.

In my experience, I've found that when the motherboard becomes warm, some of the pins seem to expand away from their slots, and crashes occur (especially fatal exceptions). Bearing in mind that Steve's problem occurred after a re-build, this would seem to be the logical solution.

Paul Watson

A Thanks, Paul, for more possible solutions to the problem, although we don't necessarily advocate novice users who aren't sure what they're doing stripping their machines.

WONDERWALL

Q I have a problem. Every Friday, when I am not at university, I go to LAN meets to play *Quake* and all its derivatives. Now, here at Brighton University I have a free, fast connection in my room. The only problem is that I have to go through a firewall which doesn't allow me to play multiplayer games. I can't even get a server list up for Gamespy. I was wondering whether there's a patch that could perhaps remedy this problem and enable me to get my 'fix' of multiplayer gaming every week?

Sam Holland

A Okay, but if we tell you, you promise not to tell anyone else, right? Dur! The firewall is there for good reason: a) to prevent security risks, and b) to stop the likes of you playing games on a network intended for academic purposes. No, really.

If any readers know how to get around this – ahem – 'problem', then please write in. But hey, we're not holding our breath. Incidentally, I don't mean to discourage you, Sam, but I studied Software Engineering at Brighton University!

GET NETTED

Q Recently I've been designing my own website. I was having a few problems (with tables, for example), so I scoured the Internet trying to find something to help me, and came across the site HTML Goodies (**www.htmlgoodies.com/**). It has loads of tutorials and help files to make website design much easier. You can even sign up for a weekly newsletter giving you more helpful HTML advice and tips.

Mike Hughes

A We've included this tip because it's short and sweet (and you were gracious enough not to include a blatant plug for your own site), but no more like this please. It may have escaped your notice, but *PC ZONE* is actually a *games* magazine!

***Quake* on LAN. But not at Brighton Uni.**

WATCHDOG

The software industry can sometimes be a closed shop when it comes to punters and their complaints. Let *PC ZONE* ram-raid their premises for you and snatch some answers

ANSWERED BY Adam Phillips

"Spare a thought for people with low-spec machines and put the full system requirements on the *outside* of the game's box"

NIC SIMMONS' PLEA TO PUBLISHERS

LIVING IN A WORLD OF HURT?

We're here to help. If you've got a consumer issue that needs addressing then drop us a line. But please remember that technical issues are not covered by Watchdog – if you've got a techie problem, write to Dear Wazza (page 116).

WRITE TO Watchdog, *PC ZONE*, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ.

EMAIL us at letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with the subject heading **'Watchdog'.**

WOT 3D CARD?!

Q I finally purchased Interplay's *Crime Killer* after weeks of saving. I was really looking forward to playing a game which looked fantastic. So imagine my disappointment when I peeled off the cellophane wrapping and read the instruction manual, only to discover that the minimum specification for the game included a 4Mb video card and a 3D graphic accelerator. I couldn't believe it. I'd checked the box twice in the shop to make sure it would run on my ageing P166. Just to be on the safe side, I re-read the box and again found no reference to the game needing a 4Mb video card and a 3D graphic accelerator. As I possess neither, I decided to try the game, thinking (and hoping) that there may have been a misprint. But no, the game wouldn't even load up without me giving it the name of my 3D card.

As shops now refuse to give refunds on computer software due to piracy fears, I am stuck with a £25 drinks coaster. So all you software publishers, spare a thought for people with low-spec machines and give us the full system requirements on the *outside* of the box.

Nic Simmons

A There should be some wrist-slapping at Interplay – they admitted that the spec list on the box was indeed wrong. To make up for it, they offered two potential solutions to your overpriced 'drink coaster' problem: "We can either send him a different game from our portfolio, free of charge, or he can return the game to the retailer for a refund/exchange as long as he informs us beforehand as to who and where they are so we can inform the retailer in advance."

Interplay concluded: "Of course, we wish to keep buyers of our games content, so we hope this will provide sufficient recognition that we have taken his complaint seriously and wish to compensate with alternative and appropriate means."

Watchdog has forwarded your details to Interplay, so you can now return that useless CD. Any readers who have suffered a similar fate at the hands of inadequate spec lists should drop us a line. You should also make sure that you read our specs list of games in the reviews section for an unbiased and real-world view on what you really need.

PERPLEXED BY PC WORLD

Q I am writing to you about something I've noticed over the last six months. I've visited two PC World stores recently, and I always head straight for the software section to check out the games. The prices are average, but on a number of occasions I walked round the corner and, on the next shelf, found the same game but cheaper. I've seen this on more than five occasions now, and wonder whether it's a common thing with PC World. I know I wouldn't be happy if I spent £34.99 on a game, only to discover that I could have purchased it for £29.99 at the same store.

I've often wondered whether it was just my local branch in Guildford, but on a recent trip to Poole I stopped off at the Southampton branch and – what a surprise! – found two copies of the same game marked with different prices – *Rollercoaster Tycoon* on one shelf at £29.99, and about 20 paces away at £34.99.

I now always have a good look around to see whether it's cheaper anywhere else in the same store, but I think other readers should be aware of this crazy system. It's a shame, really, because PC World have been quite good in the past. I just hope they can sort this problem out.

Brian Hadfield

A It's an irritating bugbear which *PC ZONE* has also started noticing recently. Watchdog called PC World to see whether they could shed any light on the mysterious price fluctuations.

"Electrical retailing is a very competitive marketplace, and prices are constantly changing," explained Paula Massey, a spokeswoman for Dixons, who own the PC World stores. "It is possible that if there are two different prices in the store for a particular product, it is because the local ticketing has not been changed. However, all product prices are linked to a central

DID DOLDRUMS

Bugs said to make *F-22 Total Air War* 'unplayable'

Q I am writing to complain about DID's shoddy after-sales customer support. *F-22 Total Air War* seemed okay until I got deeply into the game. Unfortunately, it has a few bugs which render it unplayable – bugs which will never be fixed, thanks to DID's policy of no patches once they've moved on to their next project.

I refer particularly to the bug that crashes you back to the mission select screen after you've spent ages planning a mission. DID admitted on the phone that it is a bug, and that it renders the game unplayable, but refuse to patch it. This is unacceptable – a 'fine' short-term business strategy, sure, but they'll lose so many customers in the long term that the business will fail.

Jas Hayre

A DID being unhelpful? Never! Watchdog approached DID's Don Whiteford to glean his views on the accusation that their after-sales service, frankly, sucks.

"We have actually written a fix for this problem into the *TAW* patch, but it seems that from time to time the problem still occurs," commented Don. "In actual fact it does not render the game 'totally unplayable', but it must be annoying when it does occur. In order to help us fix obscure problems like this, we prepared a bug report form on our website, but very few people bother to use it, preferring instead to write us off as uncaring. A further correction to your information is that we also support product even after we are well into new software development. Unfortunately we are not in a position to offer lifetime support for a product, and I don't know many developers who are (in this industry, certainly)."

Don says that in order to help, they need an accurate description of the circumstances under which the problem occurred and how often it actually happened: "We need to know how many aircraft have been set up for the mission, and how long

***F-22 Total Air War*: landing in a lot of problems.**

the player has spent in the mission planner. The reason for being specific is because the problem occurs as a result of the game running in real time, and events that occur in the background may upset the outcome of the mission plan. This is one of the drawbacks of going for ultra-realism. It is also important to know about the problem from more than one person, so we can eliminate any issues that may be caused by an individual's set-up."

Don concluded by saying that it does concern DID when they discover a customer who has a problem with one of their games. "If it is within our power to help, we will," he says. "I would always hope to earn customer loyalty where possible, but in the very demanding world of simulation this is far tougher than with simpler game genres. The vast majority of queries we receive concern customers' wishes for features, not problems with bugs, and suggestions are certainly considered for future products."

Anyway, Jas, we've passed your details on to Don, so let us know how you get on.

Jimmy White cues up to a familiar CD trauma.

computer via a barcode which is scanned in at the till, and therefore the customer should only be charged the current price – no matter what is on the label."

VIRGIN VILIFIED

Q I've just upgraded my computer from a P166MMX with CD-ROM to a P400 with DVD drive. Before I got my new machine, I purchased *Jimmy White's 2: Cueball* – which, by the way, is a really good game. When I tried to install it on my new machine, the drive just whirred back at me.

So I emailed Virgin Interactive Support. First off, I got back a standard FAQ mail "to see if this helps". It didn't, so I mailed them again, as asked. They replied – quickly, it has to be said – with: "This is a problem we have had with the copy protection and DVD drives. All we can do is tell you to take the game back and ask for an exchange." I find this answer quite unacceptable. One, I bought the game because I wanted to play it, and two, to return it would cost me money because I got it through mail order.

Surely Awesome or Virgin could put together a patch or update for this otherwise great game? Eidos and Sports Interactive did exactly the same with *Championship Manager 3* with a minimum of fuss.

Mark Tillcock

A **Oh no, it's the CD/DVD problem again. Watchdog scuttled off to Virgin to ask them for the official spin on your dilemma. "This problem is due to the fact that the game has been created using a multi-session format," they responded. "In some instances, certain CD drives are unable to read data off a CD that has been constructed in this way."**

Thankfully, Virgin have offered to take back your CD and either exchange it for an alternative title from their range or set up a full refund, including any postage costs. Your details have been forwarded to them.

PUNTER FOLLOW-UP

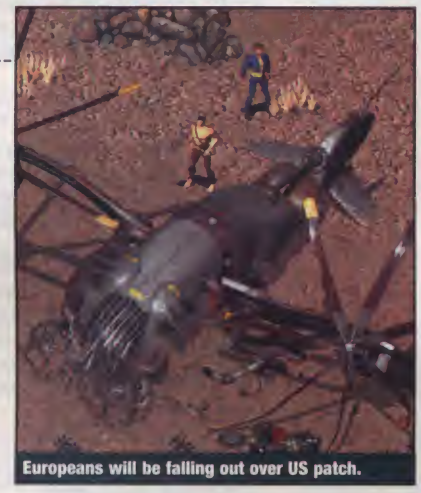
From time to time, Watchdog prints reader reactions to the letters and responses previously featured here

This month we received a letter from a reader about the *Fallout 2* patch complaint in *PCZ* #77, which mentioned that European customers were being told to use the much-delayed European patch, not the previously available US version.

With regard to Michael Franchetti's letter, Fallout Over Fallout 2, I think I may be able to shed a little light on the subject. Luckily, I was a little late to jump on the *Fallout 2* bandwagon, so it was only after a couple of days' play that I discovered a patch had been released for the game. After checking the Interplay website, I decided to download the US patch (despite Interplay's warnings regarding differences between the European and US versions). After installing the patch, I restarted the game from scratch and succeeded in playing through the whole thing without any hitches whatsoever.

It was with some surprise (and amusement), then, that in the course of things I soon found out about the absolute cock-up that Interplay had made with the European version of the patch. Incidentally, the so-called 'major differences' between the US and European versions of the game amount to little more than the fact that Interplay are obviously a little less trusting of Europeans. They've included what I can only assume to be a rather complex method of copy protection (which would explain the delay), for upon installing the US patch I soon found I had no need for the *Fallout 2* CD any more – which, in my opinion, was actually more useful than the changes implemented in the gameplay itself!

Krogg


Europeans will be falling out over US patch.

Another reader is furious with Infogrames UK, who publish DID's *F-22 TAW*. In *PCZ* #77, we revealed how Canadian customers are allegedly getting rebates on that game if they send in proof of purchase of *F-22 ADF* and *F-22 TAW*, unlike UK punters.

In response to the rebate concerns for *F-22 TAW*, this smells to me like another example of the British getting stung. Infogrames UK's explanation is very weak – you do not release a 'quality standalone product' on the back of another one and still charge full price. What about all the people who bought *F-22 ADF* as a 'quality standalone product', and were then asked to shell out all over again for *F-22 TAW*? I think it stinks.

The fact that a rebate is "not a UK strategy" means that the sooner Infogrames start hiring and firing, the better. The Canadians seem to have their act sorted.

If people stop buying games from Infogrames, the company will sort this mess out. If people don't, then they won't. Simple, really.

Andy

PC ZONE

COMING NEXT ISSUE

ULTIMA ASCENSION

Probably one of the most eagerly awaited games of recent years, Richard Garriott's *Ultima* adventures continue with the ninth in the epic series, *Ultima Ascension*, a massive first-person RPG set in the world of Britannia. This could be the biggest-selling RPG of all time. Don't miss the world exclusive review in next month's *PC ZONE*.

THE FINEST COVER CD DEMOS

And still we wait for *TA: Kingdoms*. This time though, we're assured it will be ready. That's not all: Eidos' pirate real-time strategy game *Cutthroats* will appear EXCLUSIVELY on next month's CD, as well as Team 17's *Phoenix* and the latest bike sim from Hasbro, *GP500*. We'll also have our usual large selection of playable demos and utilities for your gaming pleasure.

HONEST REVIEWS

So far it's been a great year for real-time strategy games, with *Warzone 2100* and *TA: Kingdoms* leading the pack. Next month we'll see *Cutthroats* and *Homeworld* attacking from either end of the timeline. We'll also be taking an in-depth look at *X – Beyond The Frontier*, and *Legacy Of Kain* and *Fly!* will be making an appearance, among many other games.

TIPS, CHEATS AND WALKTHROUGHS

A mammoth walkthrough section, with tips on *Aliens Vs Predator* and guides for completing *The Phantom Menace* and *Discworld Noir*. And if you still can't get to grips with first-person action games, Phil Wand and Macca will be showing you how to wield a mouse and rocket-jump in games like *Quake* and *Half-Life*.

INSIGHTFUL PREVIEWS

We take an exclusive look at what is sure to be Microsoft's biggest game ever, *Age Of Empires II*. How will it differ from the first game? Which races and units will make it into the game? How good will it be? The answer to each of those questions is: loads. We'll expand on that next issue. We'll also have more on Activision's awesome *Battlezone II* and Take 2's third-person scare 'em up *Nocturne*, among many others.

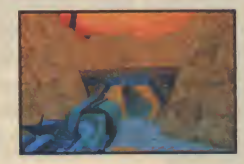
ON SALE THURSDAY 26 AUG

* Note: this is a guide only, content may change due to circumstances beyond our control

PC ZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the *PC ZONE* Top 100. Here you'll find the games that in our expert opinion are the current top PC games in their field, as well as a few extras you might like to consider if you're a big fan of the genre

ACTION GAMES



QUAKE II — PCZ #59 • 97%

The sequel to 'the most important PC game ever' turns out to be more than worth the wait. Despite the odd bit of slowdown, single-player and deathmatch games are in a league of their own. As Macca concluded in his review: "*Quake II* is pretty much perfect." Buy it now.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

HALF-LIFE — PCZ #71 • 95%

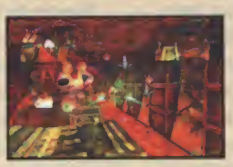
Arriving a whole year late but definitely worth the wait, this has to be the 3D shooter of the year thanks to a superb single-player game. We'll have to wait and see whether it will beat *Quake II* in the deathmatch arena.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 9209100

PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING — PCZ #44 • 94%

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin which used live action in a positive way. Absolutely packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442



FORSAKEN — PCZ #63 • 94%

Descent is dead and *Forsaken* is now king of the tunnel-based shoot 'em ups. With huge, varied levels, heaps of graphical effects, weapons and a fantastic multiplayer LAN-based game, it's up there with the best of 'em.

PUBLISHER Acclaim • 0171 344 5000

WARGASM — PCZ #71 • 93%

Famed for their flight sims, DID finally deliver an action game only they could produce. With helicopters, APCs, and hapless infantry running about, this is as fast-paced as a tank game could be – and it's even better to share.

PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0181 738 8199

SHOGO: MOBILE ARMOUR DIVISION — PCZ #71 • 92%

Half *Quake*, half *MechWarrior*, this 3D action game breathes fresh air into a stale genre. With great graphical effects and an involving storyline, it's perhaps just a bit too easy for the *Quake* hard-core.

PUBLISHER Microids • 00331 4601 5401

KINGPIN: LIFE OF CRIME — PCZ #77 • 92%

This controversial title should be talked about for its excellent gameplay and graphics rather than its violence and swearing. And the multiplayer aspect should prove fiery opposition to any other game out there.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS — PCZ #79 • 91%

NEW ENTRY Strategic shoot 'em ups don't get any harder, or more compelling, than this. Command a troop of men through WWII missions and avoid getting killed. If you're after the next step in *Rainbow Six*-style gaming, this is it.

PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

TOMB RAIDER III — PCZ #72 • 91%

There's a good chance that in 20 years' time the *Tomb Raider* 'thingy' will be looked upon with as much fondness as *Star Wars* is today. This third outing may not be as ground-breaking as its predecessor, but it's the best so far.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

JEDI KNIGHT / MYSTERIES OF THE SITH — PCZ #74 • 90%

As a double pack, this ageing 3D shooter and its expansion disc represents outstanding value for money. Dated graphics, but the level design is superb and the missions are some of the best ever made.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01895 4567000

ALSO CONSIDER

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT Eidos Interactive• PCZ #72 • 90%
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX Take 2 • PCZ #69 • 89%
UNREAL GT Interactive • PCZ #65 • 93%
QUAKE Activision • PCZ #43 • 96% BUDGET
ALIENS VS PREDATOR Fox Interactive • PCZ #77 • 89%
REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL Ubi Soft • PCZ #50 • 90%
STARSIEGE UNIVERSE Sierra • PCZ #76 • 88%
SIN Eidos Interactive • PCZ #70 • 91%

RACING GAMES

CARMAGEDDON II — PCZ #69 • 95%

It's *that* game again, this time with full 3D pedestrians. More blood, more cars, more tracks – and now with added missions. If you liked the first one, you'll love this one. If you don't, you can just bog off.

PUBLISHER SCI • 0171 585 3308

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 • 93%

Predictably, Codemasters have done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrol heads. Graphically it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it most certainly is.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

COLIN MCRAE RALLY — PCZ #68 • 93%

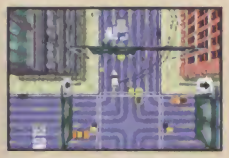
Sporting an updated *TOCA* engine, *Colin McRae* has become the new benchmark in rally simulations. With car customisability and a heap of multiplayer accessibility, this game should be top of everyone's rally games heap.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MONACO GRAND PRIX — PCZ #69 • 92%

Essentially this is *F1 Racing Simulation 2*, and an F1 fan's wet dream come true. It looks beautiful, plays even better, and the AI is second to none. You need a hefty machine to have it looking its best though.

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 081 944 9000



GRAND THEFT AUTO — PCZ #58 • 92%

This is the game that took over from *Carmageddon* as the media's favourite pet hate. Steal cars, dodge police, mow down pedestrians and cause mayhem in city streets in one of the most addictive driving games ever. *Micro Machines* on acid.

PUBLISHER BMG • 0171 973 0011

NEED FOR SPEED III — PCZ #69 • 91%

Some arcade racing games are fun, but if you like a bit more than just just racing around a few tracks then you should seriously consider *Need For Speed III*. Why? Because if avoiding the law isn't fun, what is?

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

MOTOCROSS MADNESS — PCZ #67 • 91%

An astoundingly addictive game. Loads of game and race options and tremendous fun, especially when played with a Microsoft Freestyle Pro pad over a network. Available with the pad for around 50 quid. A must-buy.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

MICRO MACHINES 3 — PCZ #64 • 90%

The manic miniature racing game gets the 3D treatment and loses nothing along the way. The new power-ups might not please the purist, but *Micro Machines 3* is still one of the finest two-player games around.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS — PCZ #79 • 90%

NEW ENTRY Drive around Chicago participating in races, annoying the police, or just cruising around. Not quite *Grand Theft Auto 3D*, but just as much fun, this should pull you through until *Driver* comes to the PC.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

BREAKNECK — PCZ #78 • 89%

Not only is this the fastest driving game out there, it also has enough options, tracks and vehicles to keep even occasional racers enthralled. Add to this the superb graphics, and you can see why *Breakneck* is a winner.

PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

ALSO CONSIDER

FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 MicroProse • PCZ #36 • 95%
SCREAMER 2 Virgin • PCZ #45 • 93% BUDGET
DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 Psygnosis• PCZ #46 • 86% BUDGET
MOTORHEAD Gremlin Interactive • PCZ #63 • 90%
TOCA: TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP Europress • PCZ #59 • 86% BUDGET
GRAND PRIX LEGENDS Sierra • PCZ #69 • 90%

SPORTS GAMES

LINKS LS — PCZ #43 • 94%

The classic golf sim gets an update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more options, luscious graphics, a redesigned menu and a view selection system. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR GOLF — PCZ #69 • 93%

Beautifully presented, as always, and sporting a speedy enhanced graphics engine, this latest in the *PGA* series also gets star endorsement by young Tiger Woods. Without question, this is the best golf game yet.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

NHL 99 — PCZ #70 • 92%

The problem with all ice hockey games is the confusion that ensues after each ruck. *NHL 99* is no different in that respect, but updated graphics, enhanced AI and spiffy presentation make this game a must for fans of the sport.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS 97 — PCZ #53 • 92%

This game doesn't quite better *Super Tennis* on the SNES, but it's as close as you'll get on the PC. The simple control system means it's instantly playable, but we may as well tell you now that the women's skirts still don't fly up when they serve.

PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

FIFA 99 — PCZ #71 • 92%

Another biannual release from EA Sports that, as per usual, is better than the last. You'll have to think long and hard before shelling out another £40, but if you love footie it's well worth it for the best football game available for the PC.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

SENSIBLE SOCCER EUROPEAN CLUB EDITION — PCZ #69 • 90%

It's still top-down, and it's still simple, fast and fun. *World Cup '98* may be prettier, but it can only dream of being as instantly playable as *Sensible Soccer European Club Edition*.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

VIRTUAL POOL 2 — PCZ #58 • 90%

Okay, so *Virtual Pool 2* scored one per cent less than its predecessor, but this follow-up beats it hands down. 3Dfx support goes some way to pushing the series further, and the inclusion of English Pub rules make it a more essential purchase than before.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

THE GOLF PRO — PCZ #62 • 90%

If you're bored with either *PGA* or *Links*, then this is the best of the 'mouse-swing' bunch. Good course design and some excellent tuition means there's loads of gameplay, though the putting lets it down a tad.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

ACTUA SOCCER 3 — PCZ #72 • 89%

Although better than last year's effort, *Actua 3* fails to snatch the title from EA this time around. Mind you, with a good range of options and a huge range of teams to play against, this certainly has a longer shelf life than *FIFA*.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

NBA LIVE 99 — PCZ #73 • 87%

Being an EA Sports title, *NBA Live 99* is, unsurprisingly, the best game in its field. If you're a Sprite-drinking hoop fan, there's plenty here to justify shelling out for the annual upgrade. If you're not, you'll neither know nor care.

PUBLISHER EA Sports • 01753 549442

ALSO CONSIDER

There's always a swell of different sports game types depending on the current sporting season. These are worth having a look at...

JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL Virgin Interactive • PCZ #68 • 88%
MADDEN NFL 99 EA Sports • PCZ #71 • 87%
TRIPLE PLAY 99 Electronic Arts • PCZ #64 • 90%
BRIAN LARA CRICKET Codemasters • PCZ #75 • 85%

ADVENTURE GAMES

BIOFORGE — PCZ #25 • 95%

Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SYSTEM SHOCK — PCZ #20 • 95%

This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the genre. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is still invigorating.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS — PCZ #37 • 93%

Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255

LBA 2: TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY — PCZ #54 • 93%

Twinsen is back – this time to thwart those pesky Esmers in this sumptuous sequel. The huge play area in *LBA 2*, coupled with seamlessly linked puzzles, creates a great-looking and hugely atmospheric adventure. A must for adventure fans.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SAM & MAX — PCZ #11 • 93%

The hilarious dog/rabbit duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a point-and-click fan.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/VIE • 0171 368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR — PCZ #79 • 90%

NEW ENTRY Although the adventure genre is almost dead, *Discworld Noir* is very much alive, throwing plot and gameplay surprises at you. Playing a washed-up private eye, you clear your name, find rare artifacts and get the girl.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

RESIDENT EVIL II — PCZ #75 • 90%

Not quite as attractive as it could have been, *Resident Evil II* remains one of the most tensely gripping adventure games of recent years. A modicum of simple puzzles, offset by liberal and gratuitous gore make for top entertainment. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255

MONKEY ISLAND ADVENTURE PACK — PCZ #74 • 90%

Monkey Island 1 and *2* are perhaps the finest point-and-clickers ever to grace the PC. The third outing may have been disappointing, but it would be a sin to exclude it from this excellent triple pack.

PUBLISHER LucasArts/Activision • 01985 4567000

GRIM FANDANGO — PCZ #71 • 90%

LucasArts not only do the best adventure games, but have also recently been doing the only adventure games worth buying. This latest has style written all over it, and hopefully signals a rosy future for fans of the genre.

PUBLISHER LucasArts • 0171 368 2255

KING'S QUEST VIII: MASK OF ETERNITY — PCZ #71 • 89%

To mark the genre's transition from point-and-click to a full 3D interface, Sierra's eighth *King's Quest* adventure proves an engaging stopgap, even if it is a little too Americanised. Good but not great.

PUBLISHER Sierra • 0118 920 9100

ALSO CONSIDER

FULL THROTTLE Virgin • PCZ #27 • 92% BUDGET
THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE Virgin • PCZ #43 • 92%
REDGUARD Virgin • PCZ #75 • 89%
GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN Cendant • PCZ #36 • 88%
LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE Electronic Arts • PCZ #21 • 93% BUDGET
DISCWORLD II GT Psygnosis • PCZ #44 • 93%

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS — PCZ #1 • 94%

This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442

FINAL FANTASY VII — PCZ #66 • 93%

Fearsomely addictive gem of a game of truly epic proportions. Great graphics, plenty of hidden surprises and massive levels will keep you totally absorbed if you forgive the risible dialogue and turn-based combat.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive •0181 636 3000

REALMS OF THE HAUNTING — PCZ #47 • 93%

Although overlooked by many fans of the genre, our Mallo gave it a whopping 93 per cent when he reviewed it back in issue 47. Still well worth a look if you happen to see it going cheap, *ROTH* is a well cool mix of adventure and RPG.

PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

LANDS OF LORE III — PCZ #74 • 90%

Westwood know how to tell a good story, and this latest in the series is the best of the lot. Combine that with ease of use and some highly polished artwork, and you'll find *LOLIII* a great alternative to more traditional RPG efforts.

PUBLISHER Westwood/EA • 01753 549442

ULTIMA VII — PCZ #3 • 89%

Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction and the exploration of the world of Britannia. The last *Ultima* series to give complete party control. Check out the *Ultima Collection* for a real treat.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442

DIABLO — PCZ #48 • 88%

Standard hack 'n' slash fare, but pulled off with such style that it's addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat and supremely detailed animation makes it a superb coffee-table game.

PUBLISHER Zablac/Blizzard • 01626 332233

TERRIS — PCZ #44 • 88%

A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but it's so addictive that we're still playing it. The various quests, puzzles and monsters will keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the 'texty-ness'.

PUBLISHER AOL • 0800 279 7444

FALLOUT 2 — PCZ #71 • 86%

Does exactly what it says on the tin. Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you like the first game, you'll love this – not twice as much, but certainly for twice as long. A real life-sapper.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

BALDUR'S GATE — PCZ #73 • 85%

With every developer 'going 3D' these days, it's refreshing to find an old-school RPG that combines traditional D&D role-playing with sumptuous 2D graphics. *Baldur's Gate* is intelligent and involving in equal measures.

PUBLISHER Interplay • 01628 423666

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS — PRE-PC ZONE

This took role-playing games away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any game in history.

PUBLISHER Origin/EA • 01753 549442

ALSO CONSIDER

These are the cream of the crop, largely because RPGs have taken a back seat to other game types over the last couple of years. However, also bear in mind...

DIABLO: HELLFIRE Cendant • PCZ #59 • 82%
ULTIMA COLLECTION Electronic Arts • PCZ #62 • 90%
RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET Mindscape • PCZ #25 • 78%

STRATEGY GAMES

DUNGEON KEEPER II — PCZ #79 • 94%

NEW ENTRY *Dungeon Keeper* was a great idea. *DKII* takes the essence of the original game, corrects all the mistakes, vastly improves the graphics, and doses the myriad of features with a wise hand. And it keeps us very happy indeed.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

TA: KINGDOMS — PCZ #78 • 94%

✪ *TA* puts on a pointy hat and grows a six-foot beard for this long-awaited sequel. Don't be put off by the fantasy setting, this is a real strategy masterpiece. From the gorgeous animation to the AI, *Kingdoms* exudes class.

PUBLISHER GT Interactive • 0171 258 3791

AGE OF EMPIRES — PCZ #54 • 94%

✪ Imagine *Civilization II*'s great empire-building gameplay improved with some excellent graphical touches and comprehensive multi and single-player options (all in real time). That's *Age Of Empires* in a nutshell.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3 — PCZ #73 • 93%

✪ No fancy graphics, no sound and no online multiplayer options do nothing to hide the fact that *Champ Manager 3* is one of the most addictive games you'll ever play. Forty quid for a season ticket to nirvana? Bloody bargain, mate.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

POPULOUS: THE BEGINNING — PCZ #70 • 92%

✪ The original *Populous* was the game that put Bullfrog into orbit and made Peter Molyneux one of the biggest names in the industry. Now Peterless, the new Bullfrog team show that they can do just as well without him.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

MAGIC & MAYHEM — PCZ #70 • 92%

✪ Based on the old Spectrum game *Chaos*, *X-COM* creators Mythos deliver a diverse and original fantasy strategy game. A strong single-player element and a manic multiplayer game make this a well-deserving classic.

PUBLISHER Virgin • 0171 368 2255

SIMCITY 3000 — PCZ #74 • 92%

✪ Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings to try out and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and newbies alike.

PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI — PCZ #74 • 92%

✪ *Civilization II* was, and still is, one of the greatest strategy games ever made, and *Alpha Centauri* is everything a true sequel should be. Rather than create another remake, Sid Meier has created the game *Civ* fans have been crying out for for years.

PUBLISHER Firaxis/EA • 01753 549442

WARZONE 2100 — PCZ #75 • 90%

✪ Both Westwood and Cavedog have dismissed full 3D in strategy games on the grounds that AI would suffer as a result of incorporating it. *Warzone* proves them both wrong, looks gorgeous and plays as good as *Total Annihilation*.

PUBLISHER Eidos • 0181 636 3000

CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER — PCZ #75 • 89%

✪ Replacing *Civ II* in this list with this remake was a difficult decision. *Call To Power* may do more than *Civ II*, but it takes too long to get into the guts of the game. You'll still love it, but if you're skint get *Civ II* on budget.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 4567000

ALSO CONSIDER

WARLORDS III: DARKLORDS RISING Broderbund • PCZ #67 • 90%
BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION MicroProse • PCZ #78 • 89%
COMMANDOS Eidos Interactive • PCZ #66 • 87%
DUNGEON KEEPER Electronic Arts • PCZ #53 • 96% BUDGET
X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE MicroProse • PCZ #52 • 95%
COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT VIE • PCZ #47 • 94%
CAESAR III Sierra • PCZ #70 • 92%
TOTAL ANNIHILATION GT Interactive • PCZ #56 • 92%

FLIGHT SIMULATION GAMES

FALCON 4.0 — PCZ #72 • 95%

✪ After waiting literally years for this, the wait was worth it. With 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure, *Falcon 4.0* can fly against the best of them – and win. One of the best flight sims ever seen.

PUBLISHER MicroProse • 01454 893893

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 • 95%

✪ This full-price new version of DID's masterpiece is perhaps a bit of a rip-off for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this one.

PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

FLIGHT SIM 98 — PCZ #55 • 94%

✪ Another year, and yet another flight sim to come from the mighty Microsoft. However, this time, with two new aircraft, a helicopter, hundreds of new airports and hugely impressive 3D acceleration, it's really worth having.

PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0345 002000

APACHE HAVOC — PCZ #73 • 94%

✪ Of the three main chopper sims available, *Longbow 2* is the one if you're a hard-core sim head, *Team Apache* is the choice for fans whose preference swings the other way, and *Apache Havoc* straddles the gap. And the graphics are to die for.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

LONGBOW 2 — PCZ #59 • 92%

✪ "*Longbow 2* is challenging, beautiful, exciting and fun – if you're 3Dfx'd up," we said in our review. If you don't have any extra graphics hardware, there's only one thing to do – think 'upgrade', 'upgrade' and 'upgrade'. It'll be worth the investment.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

JANE'S F-15 — PCZ #64 • 92%

✪ A hard-core propeller-head's sim that can stand alongside the awesome *Longbow 2* as one of the most realistic flight sims available. Newbies to the genre might find it a bit overwhelming, but it's worth persevering with.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

FLYING CORPS GOLD — PCZ #59 • 92%

✪ Action-packed WWI flight simulation with neato graphics. Some of you may recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WW1 flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best PC WW1 sim currently available.

PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 0181 343 7337

A-10 CUBA! — PCZ #59 • 90%

BUDGET

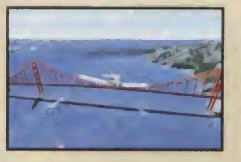
✪ Functional graphics for a game that really does capture the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Although it's slightly limited due to a lack of a fully-fledged campaign it's still great fun, as well as being pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTERS — PCZ #72 • 90%

✪ It's been a fierce dogfight to see who rules the WWII flight sim skies. *Jane's* combines realism with accessibility and ease, and although the game doesn't have a dynamic campaign feature its graphics make it a clear winner.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442



FLIGHT UNLIMITED II — PCZ #60 • 84%

✪ It can't really compete with the behemoth that is *Flight Sim 98*, and as a result is somewhat limited and claustrophobic. However, it does score highly for being more detailed in its smaller area, and much more fun.

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 0181 636 3000

ALSO CONSIDER

✪ **If a flight sim is good, you can bet it'll stay on the shelves for a long time – hence our recommendation for *Jetfighter III*. Some of the more recent releases worth considering include...**

AIR WARRIOR III Interactive Magic • PCZ #62 • 80%
F-16 AGGRESSOR Virgin • PCZ #70 • 92%
COMANCHE GOLD NovaLogic • PCZ #65 • 87%
F/A-18 KOREA Empire Interactive • PCZ #61 • 90%

ON THE CD

An exclusive demo of *Starfleet Command*, a free online taster of *Warbirds* and the brilliant *X – Beyond the Frontier*

WORDS Mark Hill DISKMEISTER Daniel Emery

HELP!

CD trouble? Don't worry – phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

CD-ROM HELP Phone ABT on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9.30am and 5pm, and Saturday from 10am to 2pm, **or email pczone@abt-net.demon.co.uk**. Please do NOT phone the *PC ZONE* office. Thanks.

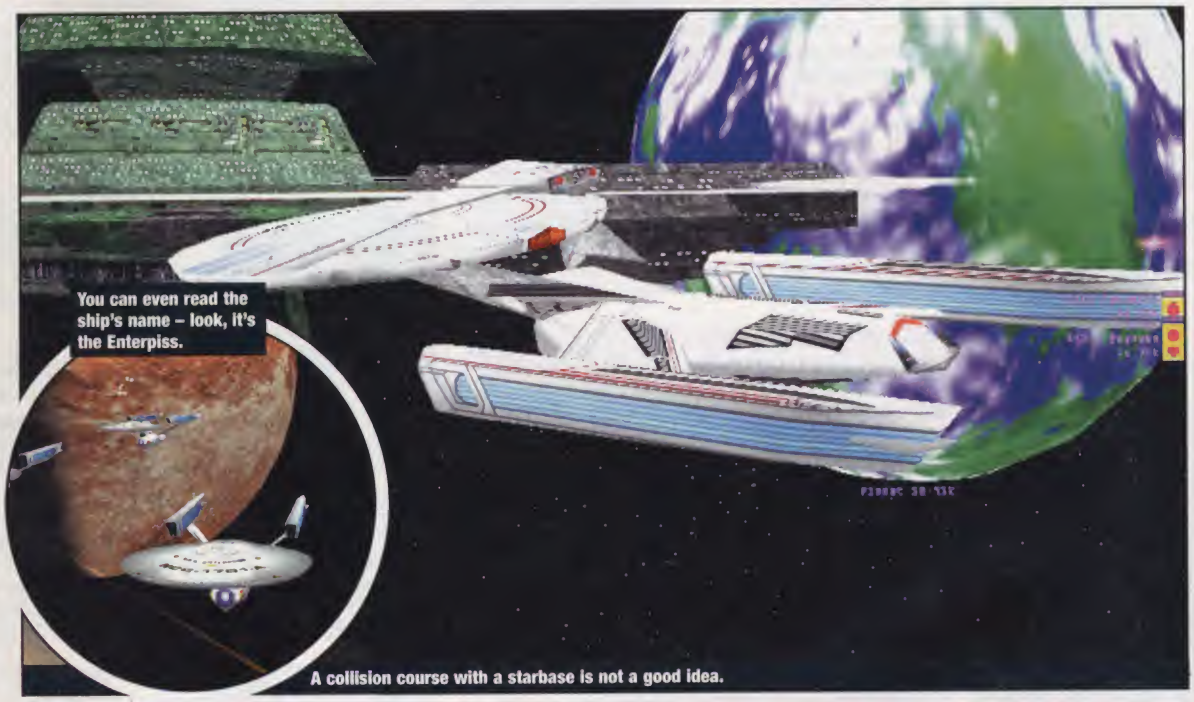
BEFORE YOU DIAL... If you are calling the helpline, please take note of the following points:

- If possible, have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information – ie system type, sound card, RAM etc – plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call so you can jot down the relevant info.

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

- You need at least a Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM.
- Many of the programs on our cover CD-ROM are designed to run under Windows 95 and, as a result, some of them may require a Pentium 166 with 32Mb RAM to run satisfactorily. Please note that some games also require a 3D accelerator card to run.
- Use the browser and menu system to see which demos are Windows 95, DOS and 3D accelerator only.

ON THE CD DEMOS + SHAREWARE

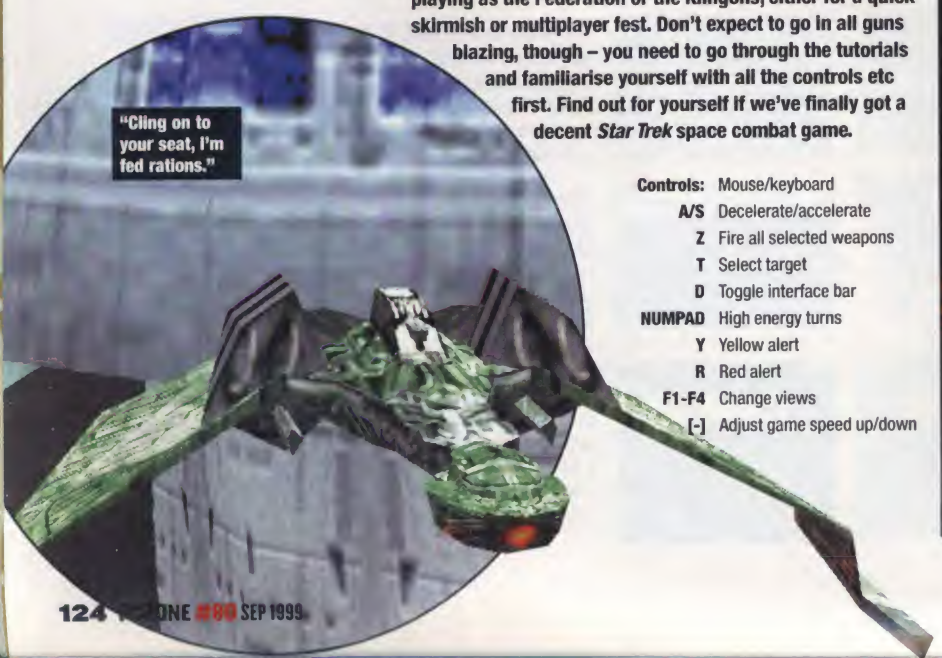


A collision course with a starbase is not a good idea.

STARFLEET COMMAND

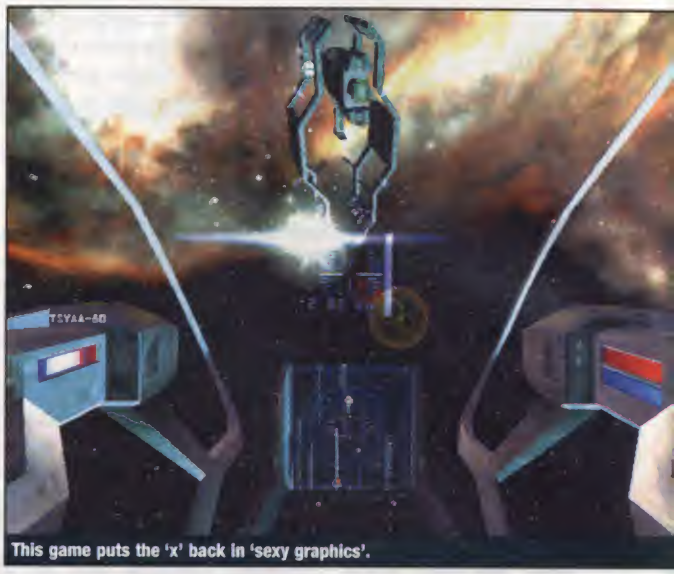
Interplay

Starfleet Command **is a complex RTS set in space, featuring all the characteristics you'd expect from a game set in the *Star Trek* universe. This demo lets you choose between playing as the Federation or the Klingons, either for a quick skirmish or multiplayer fest. Don't expect to go in all guns blazing, though – you need to go through the tutorials and familiarise yourself with all the controls etc first. Find out for yourself if we've finally got a decent *Star Trek* space combat game.**



Controls:	Mouse/keyboard
A/S	Decelerate/accelerate
Z	Fire all selected weapons
T	Select target
D	Toggle interface bar
NUMPAD	High energy turns
Y	Yellow alert
R	Red alert
F1-F4	Change views
[-]	Adjust game speed up/down

Disco dancing in space. Those were the days...

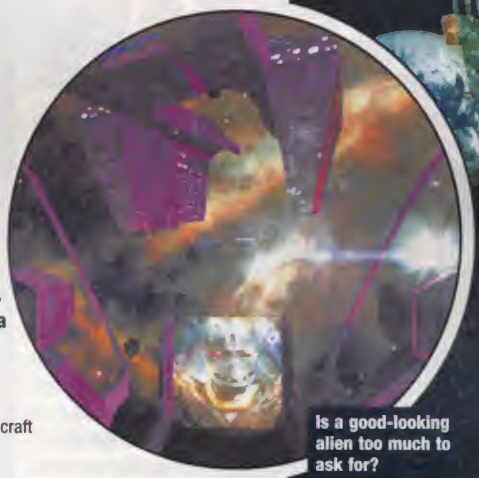

This game puts the 'x' back in 'sexy graphics'.

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

THQ

Many games have claimed to be the *Elite* of the Nineties and failed, but *X* could well be the *Elite* of the next millennium. Stranded in an unknown part of the galaxy, you have to trade to survive and pay off debts before you can begin to build up your ship and start fighting back. It may be a little slow to get into, but it's visually stunning, establishing a new landmark in space combat sims.

Controls:	Keyboard/joystick
Q/W	Roll left/right
A/Z	Accelerate/decelerate
BACKSPACE	Full stop
N	Navigation map
T	Target object in sight
CTRL	Fire
S	Information about your craft
F1	Cockpit view
F2	External camera view
O	Open/close cargo bay
F	Move cargo into bay


Is a good-looking alien too much to ask for?

Even *X-Wing: Alliance* is overshadowed by the awesome graphics in *X*.

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 - RACER

LucasArts

You'd better roll your vehicle on its side or it just won't fit.

You should have seen the film by now, so there's no excuse for missing a ride round one of *Racer*'s lightning-fast tracks. Provided your machine is up to it, this demo has enough eye candy to last you a week, plus you get to play as the delightfully cute Anakin Skywalker. What's that? You wanted a game where you get to torture and kill him? The Dark Side is obviously strong within you. 3D card required.

You're travelling at 439mph. Anakin's life is in your hands. So why not crash?

Controls:	Keyboard/gamepad
ARROWS	Left/right, pull nose up/down
W	Thrust
S	Brake
SPACE	Slide
LSHIFT	Boost
A/D	Roll left/right
R	Repair
E	Taunt/flame jet
LCTRL	Switch camera
TAB	Look back

RAGE OF MAGES 2: NECROMANCER

Monolith

Rage Of Mages 2 is a cool mixture of RPG and real-time strategy, featuring heroes, villains and magic. Explore the map and develop your character while completing missions and interacting with NPCs. Don't do anything stupid like attacking the king's guards though, or it's game over.

Controls: Mouse

OUTCAST

Infogrames

Explore a vast alien world in this action/adventure with exclusive conversations, exclusive weapons and exclusive snow. Thankfully, you can skip the intro and start running around like an apprentice ballerina right away. Of course, Cutter Slade is a really tough guy (apart from sporting a wonderful name), so you can shoot the prune-faced aliens as well as talk to them. It may not make you many friends, but it's fun in a sadistically cynical way. So, is *Outcast* a visionary masterpiece or an unbearable yawn-athon? You decide.

Controls: Mouse/keyboard

ARROWS	Run in direction
LCTRL	Primary action
LSHIFT	Secondary action
SPACE	Crawl
I	Inventory
B	Backpack
RCTRL	First-person perspective
N	Notepad
1-6	Choose weapon
TAB	Map
+/-	Zoom in/out

WARBIRDS

I-Magic Online

This month you're in for a special treat courtesy of i-Magic, as we bring you a special edition of the full working version of the fantastic WWII online flight sim *Warbirds*.

Before you start, go to the Web and surf www.imagicgames.co.uk /imol/warbirds /pcz.html. Once the registration process has been completed you'll be emailed the log-in and password details, and will have the whole of August free in the Combat Arena.

If you wish to continue your membership after the introductory period has expired, then you need to contact i-Magic to set up a permanent account.

Controls:	Joystick/keyboard
F	Fire guns
B	Fire secondary weapon
G	Landing gear
F1	Toggle map
+/-	Throttle up/down
0	Full throttle
1	Zero throttle

Die in the sky, and you can insult them as they go down too.

INT'NL CRICKET CAPTAIN 2

Empire Interactive

Take control of any of the First Class county sides for the first two matches of the season. Cricket is a sport you either love or hate – we know how we feel about it, but if you're a fan the chance of making Atherton sit a game out and the opportunity to lead your team to international glory may be enough to make you dribble all over your cucumber sandwiches. Whatever.

Controls: Mouse

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

NovaLogic

If you like your flight sims more on the arcadey side, *F-22 Lightning 3* could be right up your alley. Taking off is a pretty simple affair and actually flying the thing doesn't require a degree in engineering. Even if you don't like flight sims at all, there is one overwhelming reason why you should give this one a go: it has nuclear weapons. And we all know how much fun nuking enemies from way up in the sky is, don't we? (Reviewed on page 81.)

Controls:	Joystick/keyboard
F1-F8	Change views
S/X	Zoom camera in/out
0	Mission objectives
7-0	Thrust
BACKSPACE	Afterburner
F	Flaps
G	Gear
U/I	Rudder left/right
R	Toggle radar on/off
~	Cycle weapons
TAB	Cycle through targets
M	Tactical co-ordinates map

FIGHTING STEEL

SSI

Fighting Steel is a deeply tactical real-time strategy game that recreates some of the most famous WWII ship battles. All the ships are 3D-rendered and their effectiveness relies on the skill and experience of their crew.

Since ship captains are required by law to have short beards and wear stern but kind faces, we suggest you develop these traits before you start playing. And make sure you have a 3D card.

Controls: Mouse

TRAITORS GATE

Zablac

It's time to get all *Myst*-y eyed, and play a graphical adventure with a truly epic storyline. Infiltrate the Tower of London and replace the crown jewels with fakes, examine the rooms' decor and have your picture taken with a beefeater. The stirring 007 music and selection of tasteful tea-towels (available from the shop outside, along with mugs and puzzles) contribute to the atmosphere.

Controls: Mouse

F-22 Lightning 3: an explosive combination of numbers.

PATCHES

Don't miss out on all the new patches that have been released. See our CD browser for explanations of what they do

ALIENS VS PREDATOR SAVEGAME PATCH
ASGHAN: THE DRAGON SLAYER
BALDUR'S GATE: TALES OF THE SWORD COAST
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 3 3.03C
DARK VENGEANCE 1.2
F-16 MULTIROLE FIGHTER
F-22 LIGHTNING 3 UPDATE
FIGHTER SQUADRON 1.5
HERETIC II V1.06
ENHANCEMENT PACK
IMPERIALISM II: AGE OF EXPLORATION V1.03
JACK NICKLAUS 6 GOLDEN BEAR CHALLENGE
JIMMY WHITE'S 2: CUEBALL V1.06
MALKARI V1.1
MIG-29 FULCRUM
NBA LIVE '99 V1.1
OUTCAST
PANZER COMMANDER
RAILROAD TYCOON II: THE SECOND CENTURY V1.53
SETTLERS III 1.36
SIMCITY 3000 BUILDING ARCHITECT TOOL
STARSIEGE V1.003
STARSIEGE TRIBES V1.5
STEEL PANTHERS II
TOCA 2 TOURING CARS V4.1
TROPHY BUCK 1.07
WARBIRDS 2.7
WARZONE 2100 V1.05
X-WING: ALLIANCE V2.02

TRAINERS

Each month *PC ZONE* will be bringing you the Top Ten trainers available. However, Trainers are unofficial third-party programs and there is a chance they could screw up your games, mess up your PC, etc... Always back up any savegames you might have, and remember that you use these at your own risk.

ALIENS VS PREDATOR
ALPHA CENTAURI
CAESAR III
CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER
DELTA FORCE
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON
SIMCITY 3000
STAR WARS: EPISODE I – RACER
STAR WARS: EPISODE I – THE PHANTOM MENACE
TANK RACER

EXTENDED PLAY

Get more out of the games you already own (see Extended Play on page 129)

CARMAGEDDON II
With this collection of editors, you can change almost anything in the game, including cars and pedestrians. You want lots of money, an indestructible car and pedestrians who die in an amusing way every time? You got it.

ASTEROID MINER
Everybody remembers the original *Asteroids*, a truly addictive arcade game or a frustratingly boring one, depending on your taste. For those who loved it, here's a multiplayer shareware version of it so you can share your passion with people around the globe.

GTA: LONDON 1969
At last, the unofficial Voodoo Banshee/Voodoo Rush fix for the hippest racing game out there. So you can stop moaning and start wreaking havoc on our swinging capital.

PANZER GENERAL II
We've got 18 new scenarios for your dirty tank to get stuck into, including French, Spanish and Russian ones. If you really want to know all the itty-bitty historical facts you may want to research the battles each scenario is based on. Or you may prefer to just load 'em up and blow 'em away.

EDITORIAL

We couldn't fit this stuff anywhere else, so we've put it here

Tips and Solutions *PC ZONE*'s massive hints and cheats database continues to grow.
Championship Manager 3 These unofficial updates should pull you through until next season's *CM3* add-on pack.
Hot Shots Find out why we're shaking with anticipation for *Nocturne*, Take 2's forthcoming third-person horror action/adventure.

Nocturne: a real monster of a game coming your way this Halloween.

ADDED EXTRAS

Check out this month's selection of tools and utilities

DirectX 6.1
Microsoft's latest drivers for most Windows 95/98 games.
TreeSize Professional v2.2
A powerful and flexible hard disk manager.
EZDesk 1.8
Saves the position of your Windows 95/98 desktop shortcuts and folders.
FileView v2.1
Hex/ASCII viewer for binary files.
Hypersnap-DX Pro v3.41.00
The latest screen-capture utility, which can cope with DirectX/Direct3D and 3Dfx modes.
SciTech Display Doctor v6.53
The latest release of the universal graphics card utility.
Winzip 7.0
The ultimate zip utility for Windows.
Ameol v2.50
Brand new software for the excellent online service that is CIX.
Kali95 1.63
Latest version of the client software for playing games over the Internet.
Netscape Communicator 4.61
Try out Netscape for free.
TimeOnline v1.10e
Simple and effective way to track your Net time.
GetRight 3.3.3
Salvage broken downloads. New version.
ICQ 99a beta Build #1700
Client software for the best online chat service in the world.
GameSpy 2.08
Find all the latest servers playing your favourite games.
AOLpress
Website-building utility that's simple to use and very powerful.
Voodoo drivers
Make sure all the latest games work with your 3Dfx card.
TNT/TNT2 drivers
Updated drivers for the Leadtek, Hercules and nVIDIA boards.
QuickTime 3
The standard in digital video.
Windows Media Player
Play the Web's coolest audio and video. You'll also need it to view this month's Hot Shots MPEG movie.
MPlayer
Excellent free online gaming software.
Decode Shell Extension v 4.1
Decode email attachments by right-clicking on a saved message file.
DUN Manager 1.1f
Simplify and enhance Dial-Up Networking and Remote Access Terminal.
NavEx 2.0.1
Converts Navigator Bookmarks into Internet Explorer Favourites and vice-versa.
Roger Wilco
A virtual walkie-talkie app that runs alongside your favourite multiplayer online games.
Hyper Terminal Private Edition 4.0
A more powerful version of Windows Hyper Terminal.
Wireplay Client 2.3
The latest software that connects you to Wireplay, plus the games *Push & Shove*, *Wild West*, *MUD II*, *Dalmation Pirates* and *Big Red Racing* to play on it.

"come out to playeee"

kingpin pc cd-rom

Using the Quake II engine, 'Kingpin' is a game of extreme violence that immerses you in the bloody, brutal world of gang warfare. With full internet access allowing you to rumble with up to 16 other gangstas and a great soundtrack from Cypress Hill, this is a game of graphic enjoyment.

Virgin MEGASTORES

EXTENDED PLAY

More cars, more scars and more violence in *Carmageddon II*, a Banshee fix for *Grand Theft Auto*, hods of new scenarios for *Panzer General II*, and a yummy multiplayer *Asteroids* game

WORDS Phil Wand

TRY IT YOURSELF

ON THE CD

On this month's cover CD we've got all the official patches, bug fixes, utilities and map editors we could find, including all the ones mentioned in these pages. To track them down, use the CD browser to go to the Patches section. All the patches are listed with a brief description and any relevant documentation. Make sure you read any associated README files for information on how to install individual patches. For further help, turn to our CD pages, starting on page 124.

CARMAGEDDON II

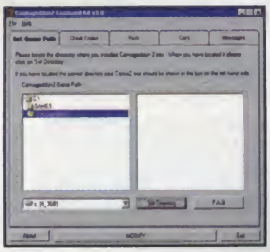
More fun on the streets of death

Bonk.

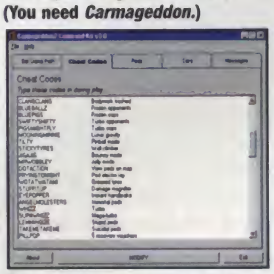
ON THE CD

Described as 'pornography for anarchists', *Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now* (*PCZ* #69, 95%) was a top-scoring, top-rated game that made as many sales as it did enemies. "It's far more horrible than the first *Carmageddon*," Charlie said in his review, "and since that's widely regarded as the single most horrible computer game of all time, this is quite an achievement." There are missions. There are animals. There are hundreds more objects to crash into and plough through. And things can get even nastier with the *Carmageddon II Command Kit*. With this little treat you can change virtually every aspect of how the game works, from how much dosh you've got to how easily the pedestrians' limbs flop off. Try out the official Plaything 2 editor to texturise and edit models for the game; use CarEd to create new cars; Carstockalypse to install and manage them. They're all here and on the coverdisc.

CARMAGEDDON II COMMAND KIT *(c2ck_v30.exe)* What's the definition of a skeleton? A leper in a wind tunnel. What do you call a leper having a bath? Porridge. Yes, okay, so we've all heard the old leper jokes, but who's ever run one over? With the *Carmageddon II Command Kit* you can create your own colony of them – then invite your friends round for a game of skittles. Crank up the probability of limbs falling off and the poor pedestrians are dropping chunks of flesh the moment they see you coming; lower the chance of them surviving an encounter with your front bumper and it's like driving a snowplough through a chicken coop. Not pretty. There are also settings that enable you to change the gravity multiplier, meaning you can either go flying or get nowhere. As with many game editors, *Carmageddon II Command Kit* comes with a section on money and points. So you can now emulate Michael Schumacher and get paid £10m for driving into people (although as yet there aren't any options for making yourself short, arrogant and German) and award yourself points for… well, doing not a lot, really.



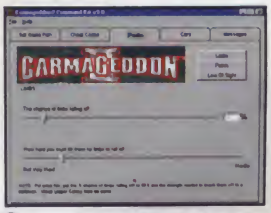
Selects your original *Carmageddon* game directory. (You need *Carmageddon*.)



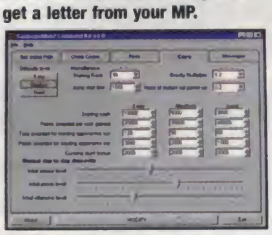
Well, if it isn't a catalogue of all the dang cheat codes!

NET ADDRESSES

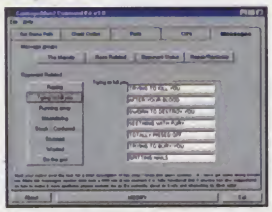
Command Kit Central	www.commandkits.free-online.co.uk
Official Carmageddon Site	www.carmageddon2.com
GTA Gouranga!	www.grandtheftauto.com
Official Grand Theft Auto Site	www.dma.co.uk/gta/gta2.htm
Wargamer Scenario Archive	www.wargamer.com/archive
Asteroid Miner	www.positech.co.uk
Borland Delphi	www.borland.com/delphi
Microsoft Visual Basic	http://msdn.microsoft.com/vbasic



Move the top slider to the left for a wider grin. Move the bottom slider KILL to the left and you'll get a letter from your MP.



Money. Lots of it. Whenever you want it. You can also set other things.



All the in-game messages and taunts from the different message groups.

CARMAGEDDON II CAR EDITOR *(cared11.exe)* Ben Beard's superb *Car Editor* is a powerful CAD tool. There is, however, a downside: you need the Java 2 platform and the Java 3D extension installed on your system. The former is a 12Mb download, the latter requires an OpenGL-compatible video card. If you can clear these hurdles though, you can make your own cars and import them into the game – we're not aware of any other tool that provides such instant gratification. Full instructions are provided in the form of a Web page, and include pointers to the aforementioned Java runtimes.

Got a digital camera? *Car Editor* enables you to create a mesh version of a pic suitable for importing into *Carmageddon II*. Superb.

CARSTOCKALYPSE *(cstock10.exe)* Another little gem from Ben Beard, *Carstockalypse* enables you to integrate additional third-party cars into your *Carmageddon* game. Usually there's a fair amount of frigging around, but all you do here is unzip the vehicle files into your main game directory and then use *Carstockalypse* to insert them. Installation instructions are provided and the interface is self-explanatory.

PLAYTHING 2 *(plaything2.zip)* Looking slightly reminiscent of the vector-based map editors for *Quake* and *Half-Life*, *Plaything 2* is an official but unsupported editor that enables you to shape and prepare new 3D models for *Carmageddon II*. Whereas Ben Beard's *Car Editor* required you to have Java runtimes installed on your machine, *Plaything* makes the flight deck of a Lockheed SR-

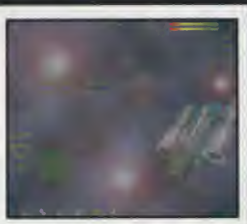
ASTEROID MINER

Fab multiplayer asteroids for under a tenner

Asteroid Miner is a top game. In essence it's a variation on Atari's original *Asteroids*, where spaceships thrust their way around an asteroid field, destroying rocks and avoiding the bad guys. In this '90s remake you can dock with planets to trade minerals and upgrade your ship. Crucially, it features multiplayer support over either a LAN or the Internet.

While graphics and audio are good if not stunning, what sets the game apart is its playability. With three or four people blasting away at each other over a small network, it's endless fun and swearing. And you don't need a supercomputer to play it on either; that dusty, coffee-stained old Pentium 166 sulking in the corner of your bedroom should do you just fine.

The chap who wrote it is based in the UK and is always open to suggestions for improvements. If you like it, register it – after all, it's just $15 (about £9). More details at **www.positech.co.uk**.



Come shoot some 'roids.

71 look unsophisticated. And there aren't any instructions.

This is what SCi use to make their *Carmageddon* cars.

TWT SUITE *(twtsuite.exe)*
There are actually two programs here. The first, *TWT Unpacker*, enables you to unpack any existing *Carmageddon TWT* archives. You can then get at their contents and make changes using either a purpose-built tool or perhaps just a hex editor. Use the *TWT Packer* to bundle everything back into the original archive.

PANZER GENERAL II

Additional scenarios for tank commanders

Some prototype BMWs duke it out.

Here's a collection of top-rated homebrew scenarios for *Panzer General II*. If you're into trundling across bleak landscapes in a heavily armoured German dishwasher, this lot should make you happy. Most are well documented and provide instructions on what to do with them, so as long as you can read you should be okay.

ALPENFESTUNG
(alpenfestung.zip)
Teams: Germans and Americans
Timeline: 01/04/45 – the Alps
The Waffen-SS digs in around Berchtesgaden. General Patton is going after them. A hypothetical scenario based around the Alpenfestung.

ARIETE-BREAKTHROUGH
(ariete-breakthrough.zip)
Teams: Italians, British, Americans, Free French
Timeline: 02/04/1942 – Libyan Desert
Italian divisions are trying to break free of an encirclement and reach friendly lines. The objective of the Anglo-American and Free French forces is to destroy all Italian formations.

BORNHOLM *(bornholm.zip)*
Teams: Germans and Russians
Timeline: 22/05/41 – Isle of Bornholm, Baltic Sea, Denmark
The Germans must capture the Danish island of Bornholm from the Soviets. The scenario includes large naval forces.

BRITISH CAMPAIGN
(britcamp.zip)
Teams: British and Axis
Timeline: 15/01/38 – Norway to war's end
A full British campaign that overwrites Blitzkrieg and Defending The Reich. The author notes that the scenario is not recommended for beginners – it's difficult.

CARPATHIAN-BLUT
(Carpathian-Blut.zip)
Teams: Romanians and Bulgarians
Timeline: 15/01/44 – Carpathian Mountans, Romania
The Romanians, having switched sides in the war, seek to regain territory taken from them by the Hungarians.

DIVISIONE AZUL MUST HOLD! *(divisione-azul.zip)*
Teams: Spanish, Germans and Russians
Timeline: 15/01/1943 – outskirts of Leningrad
Spanish volunteers of the German Wermacht are part of the besieging forces of Leningrad. The Soviets launch a fresh spring offensive against the Spanish zone of control.

EBEN EMAEL *(ebenemael.zip)*
Teams: British, French and Germans
Timeline: 10/0540 – Eben Emael, Belgium
German glider troops, led by Lieutenant Rudolph Witzig, capture the fort of Eben Emael in Belgium in order to secure a northern invasion route around the Maginot Line.

FREE FRENCH CAMPAIGN
(ffIcamp.zip)
Teams: French, Germans, Italians
Timeline: 26/02/41 – Lybia Italy France Germany
The odyssey of the Free French, from Lybia to Germany, plus two extra scenarios. Full description included in the readme file.

GRUPPO MOBILE
(gruppomobile2.zip)
Teams: Italians, Americans and Germans
Timeline: 10/06/1944 – Gela, Sicily
Two Italian formations Gruppo Mobile 'E' and an infantry regiment from the Livorno division attempt to take back the town of Gela.

GAZALA TO TOBRUK *(gtt.zip)*
Teams: Germans, British, French, Free French, Italians
Timeline: 01/01/1942 – North Africa
Follow Rommel's plan to avoid frontal assault of the Allied front line, take Bir Hacheim, then cause maximum disruption to the Allied rearguard while moving in on Tobruk.

ITALIAN OFFENSIVE IN GREECE
(italianthrustintogreece.zip)
Teams: Italians, Russians, Greeks, Germans
Timeline: 15/01/1941 – Greek/Albanian border
The Italian army's grand offensive across the Greek/Albanian border is planned as the first flakes of winter snow begin to fall.

KAMPFGRUPPE PEIPER
(peiper.zip)
Teams: Germans and Americans
Timeline: 16/12/1944 – Manderfeld
The Führer's order: capture the crossings on the River Meuse. SS Obersturmbannfuhrer Joachim Peiper starts this mission and must hold the bridges.

FRENCH CAMPAIGN
(pg2_freefrench.zip)
Teams: Free French, Germans, Italians
Timeline: 25/02/41 – Lybia, Corsica, Italy, France, Germany
Seven linked scenarios to create a unique Free French campaign. Operations include Koufra Bir-Hakeim, Vsuve, Diadem, Dragoon, Strasbourg and Berchtesgaden.

ADVANCE ON KURSK
(preludekurtz.zip)
Teams: Germans and Russians
Timeline: 14/07/1943 – Russia
Prelude to Kurtz. With the best Germany had to offer: Tigers and men. You must move quickly or the Russians will slam the door on your supply route to Kursk.

RZEV1943 *(rzev1943.zip)*
Teams: Germans and Russians
Timeline: 01/03/43 – Rzev, Russia
Scenario detailing the Russians attacking Rzev. The Germans launch a counter-strike.

THE SIEGE OF BUDAPEST
(Seige-of-budapest.zip)
Teams: Hungarians, Germans, Russians, Romanians
Timeline: 15/01/44 – Budapest suburbs
The Hungarians face overwhelming odds in the form of two Soviet armies, Soviet air supremacy and the Romanians.

THE SOVIET SACKING OF GREECE
(sovietsackingofgreece.zip)
Teams: Hungarians, Germans, Russians, Romanians
Timeline: 15/01/1945 – Greece
The Russians link up with the Bulgarians, begin inserting paratroops, and massing for a grand invasion. Hypothetical scenario.

SPANISH CIVIL WAR *(spain.zip)*
Teams: Spanish and Germans
Timeline: 01/01/1936 – Spain
A new campaign about the Spanish Civil War. It's a six-scenario campaign, beginning in Toledo and ending in Gibraltar.

GTA AND GTA: LONDON 1969

Voodoo Banshee/Rush Fix for *GTA* and *GTA: London 1969*
Continuing this month's 'death by car accident' theme, we proudly present a quick and dirty patch for *Grand Theft Auto* which instantly fixes the grief some of you have been having trying to get the game to work with Voodoo Banshees.

BANSHEE PATCH
(GTABanshee.zip) An unofficial patch for both *GTA* and *GTA: London 1969* that makes both games work in 3Dfx mode with Voodoo Banshee and Voodoo Rush cards. It works simply by changing the default video resolution, and thus should prove reliable on most cards. PCZ

The ultimate cure for road rage: a Chieftain tank.

MAKE YOUR OWN STUFF

Why not have a bash at making some tools for your favourite game yourself?

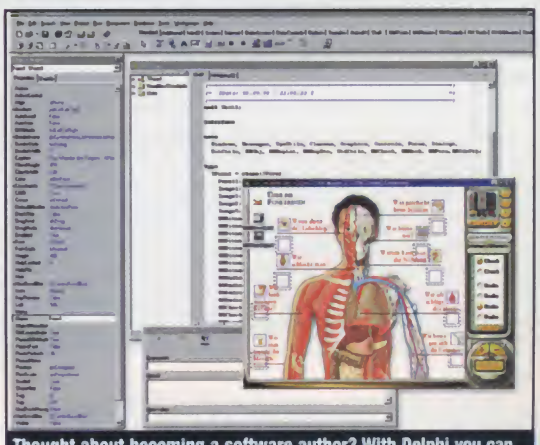
Many of today's game tools are of an extremely high quality – some you'd think came from the publishers themselves. *PC ZONE* contacted the two people behind Command Kit Central, Phill Clarence and Matt Osman, to find out how they got started.

"Command Kit Central has its origins in the old DOS-based editors we created," says Phill. "We taught ourselves Microsoft Visual Basic simply because our programs would then be available to a much wider audience."

What about learning how a game works?

"We start off by rummaging around all the data files and working out which value does what. A lot of the time it's just trial and error: change one of the values in a data file, load the game, see what's changed. Anyone can do it. Once we have a good idea of how it's all mapped out, we then create a bare-bones version of the editor as a DOS program. When we've tested it to destruction we rewrite the code for Windows."

If you want to find out more, the best way is to dabble yourself. There are countless books available on programming languages, such as *Visual Basic* and *Borland Delphi*, and a huge amount of support on the Web and in the newsgroups.



Thought about becoming a software author? With Delphi you can.

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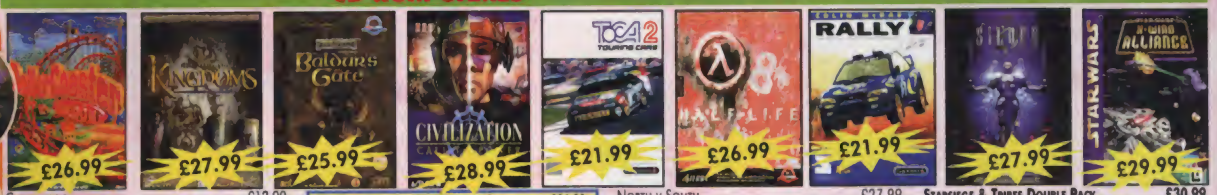

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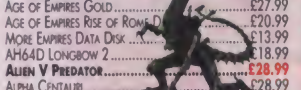

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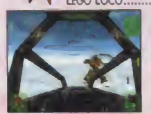
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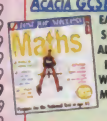

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BILL ROPER

As the long-awaited *Diablo II* finally nears completion, *Paul Presley* spends some time with Blizzard's head of development

I'm in the dark. Literally and metaphorically. Blizzard have arranged a press showing of *Diablo II* in a small preview cinema in London's Soho, and as the gathered journalists sit there watching the screen and listening to Bill Roper explaining the game's features, I can't help but notice that nothing, on the face of it, has changed since I last saw it – just over a year ago. Why is the game taking so long? But that's Blizzard for you. *StarCraft* was delayed by more than six months due to what was put down at the time as game balancing.

At a small lunch after the *Diablo II* preview (this is the first stop on Roper's exhaustive European press tour, and a plane is waiting to fly him to Germany), the question of timing is brought up quickly.

Blizzard have become associated with many things in their time, not the least of which is delays to the release of their games. Why do your release dates keep slipping back?

One of the things we focus on more than anything else is quality. We've been very fortunate in that we haven't had to rush anything out in order to 'make a quarter'. With *StarCraft*, for instance, we really felt, even as late as October, that we wouldn't be getting it out by Christmas, not if we wanted it to be the game that we really felt it could be.

With *Diablo II* there have been a lot of expectations, from the outside because it's a sequel, and also from ourselves as we address all the changes we've been making – and not just within the game. Take the Battle.net servers and the efforts we're making to thwart the whole cheating* issue. These are extensive changes to the whole architecture of the game. It all adds time to the development process.

*** The cheating issue refers to *Diablo's* online game and the quite extensive hacking that took place. Dedicated teams took it upon themselves to develop programs and routines to extensively enhance their characters, far more so than with most games.**

How much of a surprise was the whole cheating thing with *Diablo*?

It was somewhat of a surprise, yeah. We knew that people like to hack games and do what they want to things. But what we saw with *Diablo* was a game that became very, very popular, partly because we put it on a gaming service that was free – a lot of people came and used it. We were a little surprised that the cheating that went on was *so* rampant and vicious. We couldn't even write patches for it, because people would wail: "No, no, we have to play it this way, not the way you intended."

Did that lack of control annoy you?

It was disappointing to some extent. If people want to cheat to make their characters bigger or stronger in single-player games, where it doesn't affect other people, then they're only ruining their own gaming experience. I don't have a problem with that. But when they're online and it's like, "I just press this one button and everybody dies", ruining other people's gaming experiences, that's something we really hate. Just ruining someone else's game for your own pleasure just seems like being anti- what games are all about.

How do you deal with these 'gaming bullies'?

We've been doing a lot of work, especially with *StarCraft*, with our 'community'. We had issues where some hackers were really attacking *StarCraft*, coming out with cheats that let you see the whole map during multiplayer games and so on. So before we brought out our last patch we got the community involved with it. We talked to all the webmasters of the *StarCraft* fan sites and attacked the problem from a very 'grass roots' level.

We asked them to work with us, to not make hackers of the game celebrities, not to interview them or talk to them, not to make the hacks available on the sites, and so on. And we got a great response from them. All the webmasters were like, "Okay, yeah. Sure."

We also sent emails out to people that we knew were hacking the game, and said: "We're about to patch our program again, please don't attack it." I mean, it felt a little weird just *asking* them not to do it, but we let them know that we felt that hacking the game would be in violation of our copyrights on the source code, and it seemed to work.

There was one group that went ahead anyway and actually told us that they were going to hack it whatever, so we talked to their ISP and managed to get their site shut down. We didn't have to take anyone to court or hunt people down or anything, we just got a lot of support from the community, who were being the biggest driving force behind eliminating cheating.

It sounds like you're trying to create some kind of Blizzard 'utopia'.

That would be nice. It would be very difficult, but it would be nice. We've got between 2.1 and 2.3 million active users of Battle.net. And those are *active* users, people who've logged on and played within the last 90 days. We used to count them in terms of anyone who's ever logged on to Battle.net since the beginning, but it got ridiculous, and we decided to find a statistic that was more meaningful – ie how many people are playing the game right now. Compare that figure to something like *Ultima Online*, who recently said they had 100,000 *registered* users.

"We were a little surprised that the cheating that went on was so rampant and vicious"

BILL TALKING ABOUT *DIABLO* ONLINE

"We were basing our concepts and ideas on a lot of places that adventure games had already been, as opposed to looking at what the next step should be"

BILL ROPER ON THE CANCELLATION OF *WARCRAFT: ADVENTURES*

Roper is renowned for taking his time with games.

Sitting pretty thanks to Blizzard's track record.

The *Diablo* series is growing ever larger.

StarCraft required months of testing, but the result paid off.

WarCraft helped put Blizzard on the map.

Battle.net currently boasts over two million players.

The three unique races in *StarCraft* broke new ground.

Diablo II is aiming for an even bigger online community.

Roper is unmoved about *WarCraft: Adventure*'s fate.

Although the two are not in direct competition with each other, the grin that flashes across Roper's face as he reels off *UO*'s lower figure is indicative of how much he feels his vision of a semi-persistent online world is the way forward. When played over Battle.net, *Diablo II* will combine the 'dip-in, dip-out' nature of deathmatch gaming with the persistency of *UO*'s character progression. Only time will tell if it works – time and the eventual release of the bloody game.

USE AXE ON GAME

Another major event surrounding a Blizzard game was their decision to cancel the eagerly awaited *WarCraft: Adventures*. Fans the world over were both shocked and angered by the action. Letters of protest flooded Blizzard's office and Internet newsgroups. There was even a petition organised by two German fans that garnered more than 250 signatures. Blizzard, however, were unrepentant.

How did the furore that surrounded the cancellation of *WarCraft: Adventures* grab you?
It was something of a pleasant surprise, actually. The feedback we got indicated that people were interested in that game far more than we had perceived they would be. I was part of the group that 'killed' that project; in fact I was the producer on it. Basically, we sat down at one point and said: "Right, we're here with the game. To get it done we need to move it on to here." We had to consider how long it was going to take to do that and, more importantly, what the game was going to be like when we got there. We really didn't feel as though we'd be moving the meter with that game. We thought that when it came out people would just look at it and go, "Yeah, that's an okay little adventure game. It's alright, nothing more."

Where do you think you were going wrong with it?
There was a lot of very cool script stuff in there, a lot of good character development and some nice puzzles, but we were basing our concepts and ideas on a lot of places that adventure games had already been, as opposed to looking at what the next step in adventure gaming should be. Unfortunately it took us a while to finally realise that.

A lot of people still wanted to see the game regardless though.
Yeah, a lot of people said to us *(whiny voice)*: "Well just release it as it is now." It's really hard to tell people to just trust our judgement on this. You really wouldn't want to play this game when it came out. You might think it was okay, but we never felt that it would be what our customers would have expected or what we ourselves would expect from a Blizzard game. We always try to exceed expectations. We always want people to go "Wow! That was incredible," when they play one of our games, not "Yeah, that wasn't too bad."

Coming from a strong strategy game background, do you think that maybe with the adventure genre you'd bitten off a bit more than you could chew?
We never sat there and said, "You know, we really can't do an adventure game," or anything. What it came down to was us asking if this was going to be a Blizzard game. Is it going to have the elements and the quality that we associate with that.

What do you define as being a 'Blizzard game'?
It's kind of weird, because it's something that we as a group all instinctively know, but find impossible to describe.

The most religious man in games publishing today?

Are there games by other companies that you might describe as a Blizzard game?
I think *Half-Life* is close. It gave us something that everybody was crying out for. It's a first-person shooter. There's nothing new about first-person shooters, but it had tons of personality, very good use of sound, of... feel, you know? The way that as you went through the world you'd interact with the environment and it would interact with you. The scripted sequences that really brought the whole world to life. That could have been a Blizzard game. We could have put our label on that and sent it out and felt fine. It's one of those situations where you look at a game and you think of all the things you'd change about it. There are things we would have changed about *Half-Life*, but the list is really small.

A 'BLIZZARD GAME'

Blizzard come under the Sierra umbrella. Unlike most of Sierra's development teams though, Blizzard are practically a separate entity. Consequently the current turmoil created by Sierra's staff layoffs (several development teams have been wiped out, along with their games) haven't affected them in any way. Neither have Sierra's strict design policies.

It doesn't look as though you've felt compelled to follow your parent company's 'all 3D, all the time' policy. Why is that?
It's funny. People were shocked when *Diablo II* was unveiled in 2D. Part of that is because we're very separate from the rest of Sierra. We do what we do and they do what they do. I'm sure that we'll start looking at 3D at some point. We've taken a few steps in that direction with the small amount of 3D support in *Diablo II*, but it's definitely there as a flashy extra; you don't have to have it to play the game. When and if we do decide to move into the 3D arena big-time, it'll be because the game we have in mind is best served by that kind of environment. We're not going to go 3D just because we can. If that was the case we would have done it with *StarCraft*. We just didn't think that *StarCraft* needed it.

Is there a certain design philosophy at Blizzard?
We're very seat-of-the-pants, probably too much for our own good. We tend to throw around a lot of ideas, and it's become essential within the company for us to be able to pitch an idea to each other within a couple of sentences. With *Diablo*, for instance, when the team pitched the original idea to us they said: "Imagine *Rogue* and *Nethack* and *Moyra* in a gothic fantasy setting, but with '90s graphics." There was a lot of gaming shorthand going on there,but right away we all knew the references and what they were thinking of, and could tell that they had something pretty cool that we could talk more about.

It's a lot like the film industry. Once we've got that initial pitch, we really go heavily into the research and development. We start talking about ideas and what we want to achieve with the game. There's very little actual game coding going on at this point. The development side is just running wild for about two or three months. It's at this point that we start creating thousands of sketches and hundreds of concepts, and so a paring down process has to begin.

How merciless are you when it comes to rejecting ideas?
We're pretty fearless at that. There are times when you'll be like *(whiny voice again)*, "No, you can't ditch this, it's the coolest idea ever", but you have to do what's best for the game. If something doesn't really add a heck of a lot, and takes over a month to implement, it's probably not worth it. Unless it's something *really* cool, of course. Having said that, we've probably thrown away a complete game's worth of artwork since we started *Diablo II*. Not that I recommend that to anyone.

Is it all kept in a giant archive somewhere?
No, it's gone. There was probably a whole other set of Protoss artwork from *StarCraft* that we never used that'll never be seen.

PRAISE BE

There's only really one other issue to deal with, and that's to do with Roper and the 'big man upstairs'.

I understand you're actually an ordained minister.
Ha! Yes. I'm kind of the reverend of the office. I've married three or four couples now – and they're all still married!

What led you to becoming ordained?
It's nowhere near as noble as it could be. My roommate, kind of on a whim, had become a minister at his church. He didn't have to go to seminary or anything like that, he basically just mailed in and got sent a card saying: "You're now an ordained minister at our church."

I found myself in a band at the time and we just all felt it would be kind of cool if we were all ministers, so we all got our cards. Of course, as a result I do have the power granted to me by the State of California to perform weddings.

Do you ever find that your religious duties conflict with the 'evil' content of your games?
(Laughs) No, not at all. It's just marriages with me. I don't have to work too much as a Father Confessor. Thank God. PCZ

THE LIONHEAD DIARIES

"There's only one way to make sure a game is going to be great – you have to play it over and over again. Only when you've played it a thousand times and you still want to play it some more do you know you've got a great game" – PETER MOLYNEUX, E³ SEMINAR 1999

WORDS Steve Jackson

TESTING TIMES

At Lionhead, the man whose job it is to play *Black & White* a thousand times is Andy 'Robbo' Robson, who runs the testing department. Though outsiders might envy a guy who plays games for a living, Robbo's job also means he can be the most hated man in the office – it's his job to uncover bugs in the code and bully the relevant programmer into fixing them. Usually the programmer will have moved on to coding an entirely different part of the game by then, and the last thing he'll want to do is trawl through old code fixing bugs. But Robbo knows that if he's going to get his own job done, he's got to be an evil bastard. His arrival with bug report sheets strikes fear into the hearts of the coders.

There's no arguing with Robbo. He'll hound you persistently until you've fixed your bugs. If you don't like it, tough. He's six feet tall and built like an athlete (he used to play football for the West Ham United youth team). Before testing games he was a hod carrier on a building site. He's hard – bloody hard. So if he's got a bug for you, you'd better fix it quick.

Andy Robson has been a games tester since 1994. The previous year he'd bought a Sega MegaDrive. It was to change his life. "I couldn't stop playing," he admits sheepishly. "It got to the stage where I was only doing two or three days' work on the building site, and playing the MegaDrive the rest of the week. Even in the evenings I used to play *FIFA* or *NHL* until three or four in the morning."

Cara, his long-suffering girlfriend, finally persuaded Andy to take a work experience position at Bullfrog, where he began testing the 3DO version of *Syndicate*. He quickly made a name for himself. One irate coder took exception when Robbo told him his code was shit. "You think you can do better? Then why don't *you* learn to program?" shrieked the programmer. "No, mate," Robbo growled back at him. "Why don't *you* learn to program."

At Lionhead, Andy 'names and shames' the perpetrators of poor programming by posting a Worst Programmer of the Week table on the notice board every Friday. This lets everyone else know whose coding contained the most bugs uncovered during that week. "Peter usually wins that one," Robbo grins. "Either him or Richard [Evans]. Barnesey's [Jonty Barnes] programming is the best."

Andy has the perfect combination of talents for the job: a mixture of Gestapo-style efficiency, an undying love of computer games, and a great sense of humour. One minute the coders hate his guts, the next he has them in stitches. There was the time he phoned up Big Blue Box (a Lionhead satellite team) posing as a journalist from *PC ZONE*, asking them awkward questions about their private lives; he put a strip of chewing gum in Peter's sandwich; he once used Net Buster to take control of Jonty Barnes' machine, posting a series of error messages on his screen. Convinced his hard drive was about to crash, poor Jonty ran Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit repeatedly for an hour and a half before Andy owned up to the prank.

Peter Molyneux wins Andy Robson's Worst Programmer of the Week award – again.

Robbo's testing department is manned by a constant stream of young work experience recruits. Some come from local schools, others take holiday leave from full-time jobs. The website has also brought in testers from Canada, Germany, Finland, Belgium and the USA – in spite of the fact that it's unpaid work! Some testers have been excellent, others we were glad to see the back of. Like 'Loud Luke', whose normal speaking voice was a deafening bellow. Or 'Creepy Joseph' a human potato with permanently moist lips who spent most of his week staring lustily at our office manager Janice. And 'The Hairy Guy' with unfortunate body odour – something of a drawback when you're crammed into a testing room with five other people in the middle of summer. (We've since installed air conditioning.)

"It's really important that the game is constantly looked at by fresh eyes," says Robbo. "By the time *Black & White* is finished, it will have been played for at least 10,000 hours. If it was the same people playing it day in, day out, we'd lose sight of what needed changing. A new tester might come in and say: 'Hey, doesn't anyone else find the way you move around the landscape awkward?' Everyone here is well practised at it, but a comment like that makes you look at it again."

Robbo's two big passions are games and football. He captains the Lionhead football team – called Lionfoot, as it's a combination of footballing talents from Lionhead and developer neighbours Mucky Foot – which is a close second in the Research Park league. Robbo is the team's leading goal scorer. At the moment he still has time for footie, but he knows that as the end of the project approaches, the testing department will be stretched.

> **"Gestapo-style efficiency, an undying love of computer games, and a great sense of humour"**
> STEVE ON THE ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE A GOOD GAMES TESTER

"Things will get really mad just before release. We'll have to have at least ten work-experience testers, with some full-time ones as well. I'll probably move into the office and sleep here for the last six weeks – that's what happened with *Dungeon Keeper*, and *Black & White* is miles more complex than that. That's when this job gets exciting. I'm really looking forward to it, but the programmers aren't. They'll hate my guts. But we'll all make up again at the launch party..." PCZ

As well as being a director of start-up games developer Lionhead, Steve Jackson is co-founder of Games Workshop, author of Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, *and a columnist for* The Daily Telegraph.

The next instalment follows in our November issue, on sale Thursday 23 September.

he Lionhead Testing Department, managed by Andy obson (front).

The Lionfoot six-a-side football team. Captain Andy Robson with the ball.

Robbo scores Lionfoot's first goal in their 6-3 victory over Barnstableworth Tigers.

Robbo: head of testing, and Lionfoot team captain.

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